The Patron Perspective – is the Most Important Perspective

by Brian Soneda

The patron perspective is the most important and always has been. Patrons have to value their library, or at the very least value the concept of a good library in their community, if they are to become and remain library supporters. Without library supporters, where are we?

To put it another way, we (librarians and other library insiders) may think we are doing a great job being all a great library can be, but if our patrons feel differently, what we think doesn’t matter much.

So we should ask patrons how we are doing and where improvement is needed. Sometimes we don’t have to ask; each of our libraries has a patron or two or nine who will tell us how we are doing, sometimes in a heated and not very complimentary way. It’s all good; it’s all stuff we need to hear. We do ask, through surveys, questionnaires, focus groups and everyday conversations with patrons.

And now: we will hear from a number of stakeholders in the pages of this issue of Alki, including patrons—how are we doing?

Due to a 2010 bylaws change, I am the last Washington Library Association President who will serve a two-year term; future Presidents will serve a one-year term. Even so, my term, which ends at the WLA membership lunch meeting at OLA/WLA Joint Conference on April 26, 2013, has flown by quickly. (Yes, that date is marked on my calendar and has been for a long time.) This is my last “Up Front” column for Alki.

I can say with absolute sincerity that it has been an honor to serve as your Association President. I hope I have made a difference; I know I have worked hard in this role. If there is a message I want to leave readers with, it is that giving back to the library profession is not just rewarding and growth fostering, it is the right thing to do. Consider volunteering to serve on a WLA committee or as a volunteer at the upcoming OLA/WLA Conference. Consider saying yes if you are asked to serve as a committee chair or to throw your hat in the ring to run for an Interest Group officer position. And if it comes to this point, consider saying yes when asked to be a candidate for a WLA officer or board member position.

When Diane Cowles (then the Nominations Committee Chair, now the Alki Editorial Committee Chair, always a model of giving back to the profession) asked if I would accept nomination to run for WLA Vice-President/President-Elect back in 2008, I did say yes, and the membership elected me over a very strong opponent.

There are countless people who helped me stay on course these past two years; I can’t thank them all in the short confines of this column, but do want to single a few out. My predecessor, Tim Mallory, set the bar very high with his principled and energetic leadership of the Association in 2009–2011. Dana Murphy-Love and the rest of the staff at MCA always sweated the details of WLA management so I never had to. I presided over WLA Board meetings of both the in-person and online variety, with the one constant being a Board that thoughtfully dealt with a lot of complex issues; I didn’t always get what I wanted, and that is a very good thing. Thank you, Board. I absolutely include the appointed non-voting members of the Board in this thank you—you had to be there at the June 2012 Board meeting at Dumas Bay to fully understand that non-voting does not mean non-eloquent or non-impactful.

Finally I thank that “very strong opponent” from the 2009 WLA elections. When I found out that the other candidate for Vice-President/President-Elect was Jennifer Wiseman, I judged my chances of winning at just around 50/50. I also knew that if Jennifer was elected, the membership would be well served.

You will indeed be well served. Jennifer ran again in 2011 and will take office as your WLA President on (I repeat, it is on my calendar) April 26, 2013. She has been a great Vice-President and will be a great President. The future looks bright.

Thank you again for the chance to serve. I love WALE Chair Theresa Barnaby’s word-picture of life after leaving that IG’s lead position, sitting in the back of the room and offering the occasional and sometimes crotchety old-school word of advice when asked, and sometimes when not asked. Works for me, too, post-April 26.
"Alki," a Native American word meaning "by and by," 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.

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Cover photo: Librarian Jody Segal shows students the book stacks of the Holman Library at Green River Community College. Photo courtesy of Holman Library.
From the Editor

by Bo Kinney

For those of us who work in libraries, it’s not hard to get trapped in a library bubble. We’ve spent a lot of time thinking about libraries with other library people. It can be difficult to imagine what using a library is like for someone who doesn’t have our experience, who doesn’t know the rules or the lingo. If you want to get that bubble popped, just read the comments on the next news article published about your local library. Every time I read comments on news websites, I think, “those people don’t know anything about libraries—if they just visited one, they would see how wrong the are.”

But misperceptions aren’t limited to nonusers. Even people who like libraries don’t necessarily understand what goes on in them.

For example, I am always surprised by how many Seattle library users seem to be unaware that library materials can be delivered from one branch to another—a service that to me is a pretty basic function of the library.

Mónica Gúzman, in a recent Seattle Times blog post, mentioned that her husband never uses the library because all the good books are at the downtown library, and it’s too much trouble for him to go there and get them. Several readers pointed out that he could request that those books be sent to his local branch, and Gúzman admitted that she was unaware of this service.

Stories like this, which allow us to see the library through the eyes of inexperienced patrons, are gifts: they can help us to identify the services we take for granted but which are unknown—or unexpectedly important—to the people we serve. They allow us to see what aspects of our work our patrons most appreciate, undervalue, or misunderstand.

Of course, there are risks in asking people what they think. You might get bad suggestions. There’s an episode of Parks and Recreation in which a character attends a public forum to argue that children shouldn’t be allowed on the playground equipment. Even good suggestions can be infeasible, so asking for public opinion can create false hope if you’re unable to follow through on the suggestions you receive.

But we should ask people for their opinions, and we should listen to what they say. We don’t always have to act on their suggestions, but we should not be too quick to ignore them. After all, libraries exist to serve their patrons. It doesn’t hurt to ask them what they think once in a while.

In this issue of Alki, we did just that. In “The Patrons Speak” (p. 19), eight library patrons, from around the state, express their views on their library experiences. And contributors from the library world share ideas for seeing the library through the eyes of patrons.

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The Washington Library Association includes some of the best and brightest members of the Washington library community.

We are united by our care for the well-being of Washington libraries. For more information visit our website at wla.org. Explore the site and make our business your business.

Membership information is at wla.org/membership
Library Values as Library Promotion and an Expansion of Patron Rights

by Tony Wilson

It is not unusual for technically literate people these days to predict the demise of libraries. For example, Marc Bodnick, writing on the Forbes website states:

As someone who has spent a fair amount of time analyzing business disruption, I think it’s pretty clear that libraries are eventually going to fade away.

He bases his argument on the superiority of ebooks:

• Once you really start enjoy reading on a Kindle or iPad, your interest in visiting a bookstore or library goes down precipitously.
• Buying a book cheaply on your Kindle or iPad is so much better than (1) go to a library, (2) cross-fingers hope they have the book in stock, (3) borrow the book, (4) read it, (5) remember to return it, and (6) drive back to the library to return it. That’s a lot of work.

We look at our usage statistics and find it easy to dismiss Bodnick, but the time may come when we need more than those statistics. Commenting on Bodnik, cwbird notes:

one thing that favors the survival of public libraries is that the business model for the library doesn’t really require that people use it. They are often dependent on sales or property taxes and a certain percentage or millage is dedicated to their support.

We can take the position that everyone already knows that libraries are good and assume we can slide on our reputations for a few more decades. Assuming we could slide by would make me nervous.

Lisa Bunker’s response to Bodnick is rich both factually and conceptually:

Consider Fire Departments. When you see a fire engine out on the street do you assume there’s a fire? Isn’t a traffic accident more likely? Relatively little of their work these days is actually putting out fires. As buildings became more fireproof and fire codes became more effective, fire departments added EMT services to what they offer.

I think libraries are morphing in a similar way. Our core service is not just books, it is education, specifically education gained in an as-needed way. I believe people also see us as community protectors of free and creative expression. Our nation’s libraries are already responding in exciting ways to the digital era.

Bunker offers a number of examples of the ways in which libraries are responding to their new environment, including new forms of community embeddedness, “maker spaces,” and strengthened services for job seekers, but for my present purposes her most important observation is that “people also see us as community protectors of free and creative expression.”

It feels to me that defending our libraries on the basis of our values is something we don’t do enough or extend far enough. Looking at our lofty principles through our central statements thereof reveals some weaknesses. The American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, which many remember only from library school, is a solid but stodgy document that seems a little soft in that it emphasizes “books and other library resources” rather than access to what is not in the library or what is accessible on the Internet. We tout our access to expensive databases, but the towers of CDs that held the content in our buildings are long gone. Are we treating Wikipedia as a “library resource”?

“I’d like everyone to be assured that what they do in the library can be private, uncensored, and confidential.”
“Such a mechanism, besides being intrinsically honest, would shift user unrest from the issues of others viewing porn to irritation with the government for limiting their freedom.”

Should we not be expanding our notion of resources beyond the local collection to mean access to whatever we can reach?

An official interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights has a little more verve than the main statement:

The Library Bill of Rights affirms the ethical imperative to provide unrestricted access to information and to guard against impediments to open inquiry. Article IV states: “Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.” When users recognize or fear that their privacy or confidentiality is compromised, true freedom of inquiry no longer exists.

In all areas of librarianship, best practice leaves the user in control of as many choices as possible. These include decisions about the selection of, access to, and use of information. Lack of privacy and confidentiality has a chilling effect on users’ choices. All users have a right to be free from any unreasonable intrusion into or surveillance of their lawful library use.

We do pretty well with our public resistance to censorship, and the ALA’s Freedom to Read Statement is a vigorous defense of public access to reading materials. In itself, of course, it is about reading; we have to dig further to get viewing and listening. (Can we get to surfing at all in our big policy statements?) Yes, we will resist attempts to censor or to invade privacy or breach confidentiality, but those stances are all negative. Why are we not promoting libraries and their values as positives? Libraries are places where you can safely delve into anything in quiet, confidentially and in privacy. It is far too common on television shows for the detective to say, “Let’s go to the library and see what the perp has been reading,” when the doctors, lawyers, and priests all get to cite confidentiality in their scripts. Is our message getting out?

I’d like everyone to be assured that what they do in the library can be private, uncensored, and confidential. In these days of Internet filtering and changed staffing patterns there are a couple of other rights I’d like to see assured:

1. **The library user should have a right to know what he or she is missing.** It should be a simple matter on a filtered browser to inform the patron how many of, say, his first one hundred hits were stricken by the government-imposed filter (see below). Such a mechanism, besides being intrinsically honest, would shift user unrest from the issues of others viewing porn to irritation with the government for limiting their freedom.

2. **The library user should have the right to know at least the work name and qualifications of the staff member providing service.** Not that every page needs a full-name name tag, but as a user I should know if I’m being helped by a page, an intern, a library tech, or a librarian. Library staff nomenclature won’t make any more sense to the user than the levels of nursing certification, but, in any given library system, there should be an open and explainable set of designations.

I have hopes that explicating positive library values and expanding and promoting user rights will bring us some public relations benefit and help secure our future.

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**Warning:** Thank you for using the library computers to access the Internet. Of the first 100 hits based on your search, 17 items were not displayed due to government mandated filtering. Please contact a staff member if you would like to have the filters turned off for your search session. You must be 18 or over to have the filter turned off. Many local restaurants and coffee shops may provide free, unfiltered Internet access.

Click here to close this box.
Having What You Want, Wanting What You Have: Making the Library Relevant from the Patron Perspective

by Wendy Clark

It is a typical Monday morning and a young man approaches the Clark College Libraries service desk with one statement: "I need a book."

At our Information Commons, an extension campus branch stocked primarily with electronic resources, this sort of statement would narrow the scope of the patron’s desire significantly. But at the Cannell Library, it’s the sort of question that’s difficult to respond to without rolling your eyes and retorting, “We have over 67,000 books, five hundred of which are in the course reserve collection directly behind me. Can you please be a little more specific?”

Yet, as interesting as it is to recount amusing patron requests to my coworkers, I am often struck by a similar unhelpfulness in library promotional materials. Welcome brochures, service posters, or information packets that tell our patrons, “We have databases!” or “Check out a DVD!” are about useful as walking past a grocery store and having the clerk yell out the front doors, “We have food!” Yes, of course a grocery store has food, and of course the library has information. Libraries have been knowledge repositories since before BC became AD, whether the information was formatted into stone tablets, wax scrolls, or HTML-compatible kilobytes. Children who have attended school or watched reruns of Buffy the Vampire Slayer know about libraries generally. If they were faced with a trivia question that asked, “What is the name of the place that is filled with books and things where people can go to get their questions answered?” it would not take too many guesses to come up with “a library.” Libraries have one of the strongest brand identities in the world.

So then why do so many of these exact same people express surprise when they find out what services and resources their local library has to offer? Why do surveys such as the one conducted in the 2009 Project Information Literacy report Lessons Learned: How College Students Seek Information in the Digital Age find nearly all its respondents prefer Google and Wikipedia for their everyday research needs? Why do libraries constantly have to justify their budgets to local stakeholders, and, more generally, their very existence in an increasingly online world?

Of course there are many reasons. The massive branch closures in the UK, for example, appear to be less about whether or not a community needs a library and more about hoping someone else foots the bill. But one area where nearly all libraries could improve is in marketing. Specifically, in the messages a library sends to its patron base.

A message that is “sticky,” or so compelling that it goes into long-term memory and also requires the listener to share it immediately with all of her Facebook friends, will necessarily be different depending on the audience and the time. Marketing classes will tell you that the art of crafting compelling messages rests on three factors: relevance, conciseness, and clarity. Put the most important message at the beginning or end, cite sources for credibility, and back up messages with proof points. Adding stories that evoke emotion with unexpectedness almost guarantees at least one share. Relevance is the area where I believe libraries could improve their message-craft.

Most Washington libraries actively commit to aligning their resources with their users. Public libraries have the greatest challenge in this area because they serve “all” patrons. The Seattle Public Library website splits its “Audiences” by age groups and most prevalent foreign languages in its service area. Nearby King County has “Pages For...” including Kids, Teens, Parents, Teachers, Readers, ESL & Citizenship, Adults, and 50+. Special and academic libraries have a somewhat easier time because their audiences are necessarily focused. Clark College divides its audience by students and faculty/staff, although the students encompass two-year degrees, four-year transfers, Basic Skills students, and Running Start. The Art Institute of Seattle has an even narrower scope, but breaks its audience down by seventeen different art programs.

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Wendy Clark is a course reserves and video bookings technician at Clark College Libraries
Southeast Seattle made news for being number one. On April 5, 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau declared 98118 the most diverse ZIP code in the country. KOMO TV featured Ahmed Scego of the U.S. Census Bureau, who said that fifty-nine different languages are spoken in the 98118 ZIP code district, home to forty thousand people. Smack dab in the middle of this, down through the Rainier Valley, is the NewHolly Branch Library, part of the NewHolly Neighborhood Campus. The branch is housed within a “Campus of Learners” that includes a high school tutoring program, a jobs center, a branch of South Seattle Community College, childcare centers, and an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom.

In Anne Trench’s ESL class (provided by the Literacy Council of Seattle), the diversity of the neighborhood is in glorious display, with students from Somalia, Vietnam, Yemen, and China participating. When Anne’s class visited the NewHolly Library last fall as part of a lesson plan, most of the class stepped foot into the library for the first time and received new library cards and a tour. Curious about this newest of the new patron base, I asked Anne for permission to visit her class and to talk informally with these adult students about their experience with the public library. I arrived when they were talking about “giving directions to home,” and Anne had written down the action words Go, Turn, and Go Straight. Twelve students, one teacher, and two volunteers were riveted to her instruction on a white board, oblivious to the makeshift classroom they were in, which would double as a Teen Center later that day. Students whose ages ranged from thirty to seventy slowly pronounced unfamiliar terms and scribbled assignments in a notebook. In small groups, Anne asked the students to meet with me so that I could ask them about their very first library visit.

Khadija and Luul are both from Somali and have lived in the U.S. for over a dozen years. Khadija had studied English at a community college, but Luul had only started ESL a few months ago. Luul lives in the NewHolly area and says, “I want to use the library more” now that she’s found it for the first time. Khadija uses both NewHolly and the Rainier Beach Libraries with her five children, who she says “don’t want to leave after playing the computer games.” Interestingly, neither Khadija nor Luul knew about programs that the Seattle Public Library offers such as Talk Time and ESL Computer Classes, until they toured the branch last quarter and librarian Lindy Gerdes gave them information.

Sommer, from Yemen, and Sunu and Xuemei, from China, have been in the U.S. about five years. Sommer’s sister, and friends of Sunu and Xuemei, all of whom had immigrated earlier to America, told them about the public library’s free services. The endorsement by those they trusted as they navigated a place and culture that was totally unfamiliar gave them the courage to try it out.

“...They spoke movingly of the lack of libraries in their home country, in direct contrast to the resources available for their children through libraries here.”

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Vietnamese students, Tam, Rang, and Phuong only started the ESL classes six months ago but are unafraid to use the library often. Rang was a soldier during the Vietnam War, showing battle scars on his wrist, but grins that he is proudly now an American citizen. They spoke movingly of the lack of libraries in their home country, in direct contrast to the resources available for their children through libraries here.

Through a translator, I spoke to Nhon, Quy, and Le, also from Vietnam, very basic beginners in English and in the class, having the least time in the U.S. of all the students I spoke to. Totally immersed in gaining language skills, working, or childcare, these newest immigrants are too busy, understandably, for using the library much at the moment.

As I left the class, I marveled anew at the tenacity of these adult students, who tackle English while surviving American life and culture. I noted some key elements for promoting and creating library services that emerged from my short visit:

- Word of mouth by trusted sources is a powerful medium to advertise library materials, programs, and services.
- Library tours or visits by librarians to established ESL classes are very effective.
- Flyers translated into other languages about library services are appreciated, especially if simply stated.
- Popular materials in their language are reasons for new immigrants to make the trip to the library.
- Having library staff conversant in their language is most reassuring during their first visits.

Perhaps the most compelling lesson of all is that we, like these students, should never give up.

Segmenting the audience to determine relevance for each, however, is only the first step. In the recent Library Journal Patron Profiles (Academic Library Edition) survey, over a third of the 2,500 undergraduates reported that the library was not seen as essential to their studies. This seems shocking. “An academic library has scholarly articles!” an eager staff member may proclaim. To which a student might reply, “So what?”

Students, especially undergraduates, don’t desire scholarly articles. They desire to pass their classes; some aspire to earn good grades. Advertising only the “what” misses the underlying desire, the “why,” and so a message that ought to be sticky isn’t. The message should not only be, “We have scholarly articles!” but also, “We have the resources you need to write the research paper your teacher loves.”

Many libraries recognize this and have started to take steps. Spokane Public Library advertises its community program series in “Beyond Books: Discover new topics, learn something new, connect with your community.” Kitsap Regional Library advertises its premier movie club with “See major motion pictures before anyone else.” Asotin County Library advertises its eBook offerings with “Why buy when you can borrow?” These all connect the resource with a desire: to learn and connect, to receive prestige, to save money. Connecting a library resource to one of Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef’s fundamental human needs (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, freedom) can greater strengthen a message’s emotional resonance.

This fall, following in the footsteps of top institutions across the nation, Clark College Libraries formed a library marketing committee. With a joint team of stakeholders, we have begun examining how we serve our patrons and exploring ways to speak directly to their needs. We are re-evaluating the messages we send in our print materials, around our building, and out in the world.

We are also considering how to keep the essential information, the “what,” without becoming coy and clever about the “why.” After all, if a patron only wants to check out a DVD, she will be pleased to know in as few words as possible that we do, in fact, have them.

Notes
At the University of Washington Libraries, we interact with students in all the traditional ways you might suspect. We provide reference and instruction services, support their academic work through collaborative spaces and technologies, and connect them to collections for study and research. We’re also proud to be the largest employer of students at the University. One way that we show our appreciation is through the Student Employee Scholarship Program. When applying for the scholarship, students are asked to submit an essay in which they reflect on their time working in the Libraries: what they have learned themselves, how the Libraries have helped in their academic work, a particular resource, or a memorable or challenging experience while working here. These reflections provide staff with a unique view into students’ engagement with scholarship, services, and collections. Over the last couple of years, a number of themes have emerged that illustrate what the work means to the student employees and how it supplements their educational experience at UW.

Students employed at the Libraries make connections between different areas of their academic work and interests, and engage with materials beyond what’s required for the task at hand or for their academic use. Megan Elizabeth Saunders, a scholarship winner from 2012, illustrates her imaginative interaction with materials at the UW Tacoma Campus Library:

There’s an episode of Dr. Who called “Silence in the Library” in which the Doctor goes to a planet that’s just one enormous book reserve. It’s the library for the universe housing every book ever written, from The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy to the works of Agatha Christie to the instruction manual for the TARDIS...If I were a time traveler, I’d have all the leisure to get better acquainted with these bound souls, the young ones in the Children’s section and the old souls resting in the Auxiliary stacks. I’ve learned some personalities get along better with some books than others. (The QA’s and I are cordial, but I don’t see us hanging out.) I’ve learned that I don’t need a spaceship to take me to any faraway lands, and I don’t need a time machine to see history in action. Instead, I have the University of Washington Libraries.

For many of our student employees, their work in the Libraries not only contributes to their education financially, but also grounds their study through working with the collections, other users, and staff. Zach Schremp, a Student Employee Scholarship winner who worked in the map collection, wondered whether his academic work in history would really be useful in his ultimate goal of becoming an engineer.

Working in the Libraries, he made new connections that affirmed his aspirations:

My interest in history has...been fostered by my work in the Map Collection. I have assisted people doing historical research for environmental impact statements, looking for long-overgrown logging roads, and trying to pinpoint where tsunamis hit coastlines over a hundred years ago. These experiences have shown me that an interest in history is immediately applicable to my academic work in engineering. I now know that either as an academic or in professional practice, historical maps and aerial photographs can help me understand an environmental or ecological transformation, the development of a job site, or the impacts of a natural disaster. In short, my experience at the Map Collection has been nothing short of fascinating. The people with whom I have interacted, both coworkers and patrons, have helped me come to a better understanding of what I can do academically. If I had never worked here, I never would have seen many of the connections between my areas of interest. I am grateful for these experiences and for what I have learned about myself working here.

Becoming more intimately involved with the wide range of resources at the Libraries, a number of students also recognize the privilege of hav...
ing access to an education and the vast store of information available to them. Ben Silver, a 2012 scholarship recipient, explains:

As a UW libraries employee, I am constantly reminded of how important it is to recognize that the freedom to come here and take part in what happens at this university is not universal. The freedom to take part in vigorous debate, and grow together with peers and mentors alike, is not universal. The freedom to read and engage in library material, ranging from new motion pictures to books banned throughout the world, is not universal.

Students’ appreciation of the role of the library in their educational experience extends to space as well. Konrad Palubicki, a 2011 scholarship recipient who worked in Suzzallo, the UW’s central library, reflects upon what the library as place, particularly the Suzzallo Library reading room, has come to mean to him during his undergraduate years:

I am currently sitting beneath an ornate lamp at one of many study tables. Light shines through the beautiful stained glass window to my left. A movement catches my eye and I glance over toward the doorway. A large tour group enters the room and stands in awe. Some of the younger students in the group pull out cell phones to snap pictures. Others simply smile. I can’t help but smile myself. Though I will be graduating next year, this room will continue serving as a resource both to students and library patrons well into the future. It is this thought that keeps me smiling as I pack up my belongings. The Reading Room has truly been a critical resource for me, and the hours that I have spent here will never be forgotten.

The fact is that the UW Libraries simply cannot function without the contributions of our student employees. Many of them are working here long after most of the staff have gone home for the day, they keep our collections in top order, and they provide excellent service to our users. In listening to the voices of students as they reflect on their work in the Libraries, I’m reminded that though they are employees, they are students first. As such, they have special relationships with the Libraries. We value all of the students who take advantage of our services and collections, but for our student employees who contribute so much to the work of the Libraries, their engagement supplements their student experience while moving us forward in our mission of connecting people with knowledge.
The library and its programs provide [children] with life-changing experiences and opportunities.”

Barbara Strader, a teaching assistant at Endicott Elementary School sees firsthand the positive difference the library makes for local children: “In our small town, many families don’t have computers, Internet, or video games like Wii. The library and its programs provide them with life-changing experiences and opportunities.”

Another young woman, Katy King, was always very involved with the library’s adult craft programs. Katy was homeschooled and started attending craft day in her early teens as a participant and, later, as an instructor. When Katy turned eighteen, she needed to find a job. Combining her creative skills with her background teaching and learning from the library’s craft programs, she applied with organic farmer Mary Jane Butters who utilized Katy’s skills for her popular farm-style crafts and products. And Katy just recently published a book of her own.

Endicott’s library manager says of their weekly craft day, “It is extremely popular for isolated homeschool families and elderly people looking for socialization. Many people on low or fixed incomes appreciate the opportunity to make inexpensive gifts for family and friends.”

Recently, the library offered a workshop by a regional physical therapist related to preventing back problems and the best exercises to strengthen and care for your back. Caroline reported a number of participants went away with exercises specific to their conditions. Caroline says some of these people are uninsured and were so appreciative of the opportunity to get professional advice for free.

Finally, I was reading the Moscow Pullman Daily News last spring and spotted a story about a young woman’s experience growing up in a small town and how she scheduled her childhood around their little library. Guess what? That library was the Endicott Library and the woman, Marie Jayne Reiber, had grown up to become a well-rounded adult and also a Trustee of the Friends of Neill Public Library in Pullman.

Reading Marie’s experience in my morning paper clearly demonstrated to me how lives have been positively affected for years at the Endicott Library.
Reflect back and recall how you learned to do effective library research. It was likely a long process occurring in your student years, and possibly beyond. It entailed doing many assignments from various teachers and professors, each experience building on the previous one. As you learned how to comprehend scholarly literature, you also learned how to find more of it, as it related to each academic need you encountered. Sometimes you stumbled upon sources that caught your attention and governed the direction of your research in an unexpected direction that may have become more interesting than the direction in which you’d set out. Each research adventure had its rewards in terms of what you learned from it. Each subsequent time you attempted a research topic, whether academic or personal, you became more adept at grappling with the library and the literature.

How that protracted experience actually happens is difficult to analyze precisely. Quantitative library use and user research studies examine and present a general model of information retrieval, information seeking behavior, and information use. Pedagogy takes learning styles into account as different teaching approaches and media are used to address information skill learning. The literature of library and information science contains an abundance of such studies. Of interest to librarians who teach information literacy is what is learned and what students seem not to learn at certain points in their acquisition of information literacy skills. Instruction librarians continue to teach patrons who struggle and don’t quite grasp good information literacy skills.

Another way to look at learning information literacy is from the learners’ perspective. Library patrons are often frustrated navigating complicated, seemingly unintuitive means of finding what they seek. Trying to understand the learning experience from the patron perspective requires different research methodology but offers insight into how learners appropriate information literacy skills and how their learning process builds and grows. Qualitative research in this area is a more discrete portion of the literature that seeks to uncover the experiences and understandings of library users from their own point of view. It provides additional insight on how students and other library patrons learn information literacy skills and their understanding of their experience as they learn to do effective research. It connects information seeking with learning outcomes and shows variation in learning and information seeking. Rather than showing a final achievement of information literacy objectives, qualitative studies reveal a continuum of research skills learned as part of a process of experienced reality that is ongoing.

Interviews are an essential method used in qualitative research, but they can be used somewhat differently with varying other methods. Studies of two types of information seeking and learning will be considered, each using different qualitative research methodology: intentional information seeking to solve a research need, and serendipitous discovery of information. Each is studied in the literature using different qualitative inquiry methodology. Intentional information seeking has been more widely studied and many of the studies have been conducted using phenomenography as a research method. Accidental discovery or opportunistic discovery of information is more difficult to study and has been studied successfully using surveys or diary and journal techniques of qualitative inquiry combined with interviews. Both of these are useful methods of qualitative research inquiry widely recognized as reliable means to explore how individuals see and experience new phenomena and capture their thoughts, feelings and interpretations of meaning and process.

Phenomenography research “has as its aim the finding and systematizing of forms of thought in terms of which people interpret significant aspects of reality.” The focus is on the perception of reality, and the research is oriented towards people’s ideas about the world and their different experiences, thoughts, and understanding of it. Such research “aims at description, analysis, and understanding of experiences” and “would refer to anything that can be said about how people perceive, experience and conceptualize” aspects of reality, or phenomena. Phenomenography deals with the experiential and conceptual, what are culturally learned and individually developed ways of relating to the world around us. Although research is conducted with individuals’ ideas, thoughts, and personal experiences about particular phenomena, the analysis of the combined data of study cohorts leads to categories of description of the collective mind of the cohort rather than individuals. The phenomenon of learning information literacy has been described in the literature of library and information science. Qualitative inquiry...
complements other findings found in quantitative studies, adding the actual perception of the experience of learning information literacy from the patrons’ perspective.

Intentional information seeking is learned by children in school in response to assignments given by teachers. This pattern continues through higher education and has been studied at all levels of education. Studies of younger children in latter elementary school grades indicate that the way children learn to approach assignments can be seen later in their education as well.

Those notions and experiences that the students developed through their assignments mean that research is to choose a topic, to find one of several sources, to read, to write and to present... There are few indications that new technology, in itself, supports students’ learning or enhancement of knowledge... One must be able to reformulate different kinds of information obtained from different sources into usable knowledge for specific practices. This process is normally absent in the students... Seeking meaning in terms of learning is experienced as doing right during the information search process.

How younger students construct meaning is a gradual process that changes continuously as the learning proceeds. The process continues in secondary school. Students encountered problems less related to a lack of specific skills and abilities than to difficulties encountered making connections between those skills and information literacy as a means of building a knowledge base of both the subject and its information content. Looking at five studies of middle and high school students, Kuhlthau found that a series of stages of changes in feelings, thoughts, and mood occurred during the phenomenon of researching as information needs and levels of specificity changed. As high school and middle school students moved from general and vague at initiation to specific, more narrowed, and focused, their discomfort, uncertainty, frustration, anxiety, and confusion changed to confidence and relief. This increased confidence corresponded with an increase in clarity and focus and provided evidence of sense-making, but did not correspond with the quality or variety of their sources.

Phenomenography studies of high school students that build on previous user studies contribute a better understanding of why information seeking is a complex process. Students experience and conceptualize the phenomenon of learning to do research differently. In a study that focused on what students experienced and how they thought about the phenomena, students were given a research assignment by their teacher. Their information seeking was intentional in order to complete the assignment. They were interviewed before, during and after the completion of the assignment. Learning was viewed in terms of a change of ways of understanding the phenomena of experiencing their research process. Analysis showed that students experienced three conceptions of information seeking and use: fact-finding, balancing information in order to choose right, or scrutinizing and analyzing. How these students handled bias and relevance of resources distinguished the difference in outcomes. Students that conceptualized information seeking as fact-finding used fewer sources, and experienced their research as finding correct answers to discrete questions. Easy access was important to them as well as cognitive authority judged on the basis of status or expertise, but bias was dismissed as faulty. Only small changes occurred in these students’ ways of reasoning about the subject matter of the assignment, and they knew only discrete bits about the subject. Those students who balanced information in order to choose right sought only enough information to form a personal standpoint that covered the direct and indirect questions of their research topic. Their conceptions of the subject changed from a vague to a clear idea and from uncertainty to a taking a stance. They judged cognitive authority of sources on the basis of status or expertise and handled bias by choosing sides. These students used more sources than the fact-finding students and experienced a dynamic process as they focused their topic. These students experienced anxiety initially, which grew to self-confidence by the end of the process. Students who scrutinized and analyzed were the smallest group but their focus was broadest. They experienced information seeking as using information to understand their topic and treated it critically, evaluating and analyzing information sources. They placed their topic in a wider context, did not restrict relevant judgments, and understood scrutinizing as trying to reveal and structure underlying motives and values in information sources. They assessed cognitive authority according to status and expertise, and also content of sources. These students’ understanding changed from discrete bits to critical assessment of information grounded in deep understanding and evaluation of the subject matter. The variation in information seeking and use of information interacts closely with the students’ conceptions, understanding, and experience of information content as evidenced by the different descriptions of learning outcomes: “Differences between students’ understanding of subject content influenced how they searched for and used information. Differences in students’ experience of information seeking and use influenced both how they searched for, and used, information and what they learned about content.”

“Information and communication technologies, while viewed by most students as most important for their information seeking behavior, did not improve students’ information literacy abilities.”

Continued on next page
Information and communication technologies, while viewed by most students as most important for their information seeking behavior, did not improve students’ information literacy abilities. Technological tools were found to strengthen the orientation toward procedure rather than encouraging or supporting understanding of complex issues. Information literacy means learning to use different strategies and sources in different media formats. If students are able to master digital technology, the ability to critically evaluate different sources contributes to meaningful information-based learning. Studies show that many students do not master technology well. One such study concludes that seventy-five percent of the participants approached information seeking as random catches they happened to come across through browsing the Internet and others sources. Their research was guided by what they came across, not by what they searched for, and their knowledge formation was poor. They compiled facts and transferred text from sources to their own research writing. Their goal was to complete their assignment swiftly, and their abilities with technology were limited, which they often blamed on the technology. Twenty-five percent systematically explored and investigated topics, guided by clear awareness of the meaning of their research and their involvement with the content. These students were more reflective in their approach to their assignment. The quality of their information seeking closely interacted with their learning outcomes.

Studies of undergraduate college students in the library and information science literature reveal evidence that students do not necessarily learn or retain information literacy instruction. Qualitative inquiry is a window into the students’ perceptions of this phenomenon to help understand “research that indicates many students leave higher education without ever attaining much-needed information literacy skills.” College freshmen are at a juncture in their education when warm, friendly people can intervene to help them perceive the library as a place with fascinating information rather than as a scary place. Seventy-five to eighty-five percent of students in a study “described their initial response to library research in terms of fear… their own library-use skills are inadequate… the inadequacy is shameful and should be hidden, and… would be revealed by asking questions.” In addition to this anxiety, vagueness and confusion frequently accompany first-year students’ initial attempts to locate information in a library. But information literacy skills can improve and grow and become a foundation for knowledge acquisition. After extensive information literacy instruction within a discipline, students in a study were asked to reflect on the phenomenon. “For some students, it was a revelation… many of them had not reflected on how or why they gathered (or failed to gather) information… some students were enthusiastic in identifying specific ways in which the new awareness of this process had made them more efficient and effective.” Several studies indicated that college and university students’ approaches to research were not substantially different from the approaches of high school students. As with the high school students, the awareness of college students was, for some, focused on fact-finding, gathering sources, and determining their credibility, with the content viewed objectively separate and distinct from the user. Finding information was conceptualized through focused use of technology or located in information sources, but was only focused on finding the information, not its use. Students experienced information literacy as “seeking evidence to back up an existing argument.” Their task was their assignment, and learning about the topic was not a focus. For other students, their conception was on initiating and carrying out a process to use information. It involved learning by doing, by trial and error, and by interacting with other people. Students learned about their process as well as about the information. The information was still viewed as separate and distinct from the user by these students. Other students learned about their topic, changed their standpoint, or rethought their argument as they discovered more information. The assignment was a secondary focus as they “searched for information for their own interest.” While some students developed a personal knowledge base, others applied that knowledge to a broader context or to problems, such as social issues. The focus for these students is on how the knowledge is used, decision making and problem solving, sharing information, and creating new knowledge.

Undergraduate students’ general view of information literacy is focused on product rather than process, a perception of achieving skills on their own, a preference for people over other information sources, and an emphasis on personal interest. Research in the domain of competency theory indicates that those who are less competent overestimate their performance as tested on skills tests. They are nonetheless quite confident of their abilities, having an inflated self-view of their skills and lack the metacognitive ability to make more realistic estimates of their performance or the expertise of others. “When people gain skills in a domain, they are better able to assess their own skill level, recognize the abilities of others, and make better estimations of their own performance.” Some students do improve their information literacy skills while many do not improve them appreciably, leaving higher education without ever attaining information literacy skills. The association of information literacy with independent and lifelong learning is evident as those who experience it go through an information seeking and use process to acquire new meaning and understanding. Some students experienced an assignment as merely an end in itself, others experienced assignments as learning, while others internalized the experience as seeking meaning and understanding and relating it to problems of social responsibility. Some experienced surface learning approaches while others experienced deep learning experiences. However, information behavior is not always intentional. People often find information when they are not deliberately seeking it. Information encountering can happen when we least expect it. It can be serendipitous and unsystematic. Sometimes it can happen when we are browsing casually or having a conversation or listening recreationally. It can happen almost anywhere or any time. It can also happen that we
“stumble upon interesting and useful information without performing an active search or while searching for a different topic entirely. In these situations, information is discovered unintentionally, fortuitously, and unexpectedly, often resulting in a valuable outcome.” Opportunistic discovery of information may provide the individual with useful and applicable information that is welcome. When this occurs it is unplanned and therefore more difficult to study. A method of studying this type of serendipitous information encounter is through asking library patrons to keep reflective diaries to gain an understanding of the nature of serendipity. Other studies depend on participants to recall and reflect on accidental information discoveries.

Information behavior involves users’ observable actions, their thoughts, and their feelings. A sample of both students and library employees were asked through surveys and interviews for their recollections of specific accidental information encountering experiences and their perceptions of those experiences, as well as what their activities immediately before and after the information encounter were. Respondents’ thoughts and feelings were analyzed and compared to immediately before and after the information encounter. The study found that there was a change in the type of thoughts experienced by respondents, from thoughts unrelated to information behavior to information behavior-related thoughts after the encounter. Their feelings also changed from feelings of frustration, boredom, and anxiety to feelings of excitement, happiness, and interest. Information encountering brought satisfaction to respondents’ browsing activities and reinforced browsing habits. “Several interview respondents specifically stated that information encountering enabled them to see their information needs from a different perspective.” The serendipity of opportunistic information encounters shifts users across time, parallel problem areas, and different subject areas representing actual user information behavior. An innovative technological form of using diaries to study the serendipity of peoples’ information research was done using mobile diaries. The mobile phone-based technology gave researchers the opportunity to capture serendipitous experiences as they happen. Since serendipidity is unpredictable, recording the experiences as they occur simplified difficulties of recalling and recounting accurately the experiences later and minimized memory lapses. Participants selected were PhD students involved in individual research, as previous research had suggested that serendipidity is widely experienced among researchers. The study explored the nature of the serendipitous experience and the participants’ perceptions. Some perceived these experiences as fortunate accidents or coincidences, others as unexpected finds with a positive impact or unexpected connections between information. They experienced it as impactful, productive, and beneficial; as one participant said, “It is like a spark, and certain things change when you think about it further.” Participants were able to unexpectedly connect information, ideas, and people when they felt relaxed and unpressured and when the encounter came at just the right time. It happened most often in a structured environment that promoted thinking about work such as in offices, lecture and seminar rooms, the Internet, libraries and bookstores, or sometimes when they were moving about in constantly changing environments. The emotional impact of serendipitous information encounters was positive and stimulating, sometimes even leading to a spark, and certain things change when you think about it further.”

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chain of events or a different direction to explore.

Understanding the thoughts, feelings, and actions of users is insightful. Information encounterers’ cognitive states change at the time of an information encounter. “The thoughts that users may have while not being able to find some information tend to be depressive and negative... After encountering some useful information relating to another problem or some otherwise interesting information, users become more self-assured.” Some people tend to encounter or collect useful or interesting information serendipitously more often than others. Others stay more focused, being less distracted by opportunistic information encounters. Those who encounter information serendipitously on a regular basis consider it an important element of their information acquisition process. Their information is both problem-solving and interest based, and can be related to past, present, or future needs. These information seekers are referred to in the literature as “super-encounterers.” Information encountering experiences move users across different problem areas, time frames and from one currently pursued problem to another parallel problem area. This lateral movement among problems and information needs may be more true to real-life information behavior as a more complex phenomenon than models of information behavior that depict a single problem or information need.

Serendipity is a common way of finding information on the Internet. Information users often have different understandings of what is involved in searching, browsing, scanning, or encountering information accidentally. The latter involves memorable experiences of unexpected discovery of unsought information that is useful or interesting. In a study of 121 participants using survey methodology, twelve were super-encounterers. Interviews were used as a follow-up with these participants whose browsing appeared to be reinforced by often having satisfactory experiences of information encountering. These super-encounterers explicitly preferred other environments, such as print or people, to the Internet. The majority of information encountering experience occurred in the context of intentional information seeking. Their comments were that the Internet was preferable for play and fun but barriers of several kinds made it less conducive to information encountering. Those barriers were technical barriers, information barriers (i.e., the environment is “too loaded” with pre-structured information forcing users to take paths designed by someone else), and psychological barriers (e.g., the Internet may be too obsessive and the fear of becoming “too exposed”). These barriers may be more critical for those who often experience serendipity, while many Internet users have difficulties staying focused on specific problem areas without meandering away with every interesting hyperlink encountered.

Studies draw the conclusion that the interaction between information seeking and learning and students’ ways of experiencing information seeking and use are not independent of the

Have you thought about becoming more active in WLA, but didn’t know how to go about it? We have heard from members that they didn’t have a way to feel involved without biting off more than they could chew. The Member Services Committee has originated a new program which we are calling Library Ambassadors. Library Ambassadors are needed within each library or library system. A Library Ambassador is a real, local face for library workers to attach to our organization, and you could be that face! As a Library Ambassador, you will play a vital role in WLA by linking membership with leadership within our organization. Our Library Ambassadors will pass information, questions, and concerns both ways—from the organization to its members and from members to the organization.

Becoming a Library Ambassador will allow you to get your feet wet without being drowned in additional work. You will need to let staff members know who you are and that you can be the local contact for questions, comments, or suggestions about WLA and its membership. We anticipate you may be using email as well as face-to-face contact (perhaps at a staff meeting) to introduce yourself in this new role. We would like our Library Ambassadors to also establish a place within their libraries where they can post WLA information. Library directors (who are undoubtedly WLA members) would probably help find some unused wall space—even if it is in the staff restroom. We will provide packets for you to give new hires. We want them to be aware of who we are and what benefits they will derive from membership.

The rewards will be great. You will become a recognized name within your library and WLA. You will meet some terrific people, who you may actually meet face-to-face during the conference. (By the way, the 2013 joint WLA/OLA conference is in Vancouver, WA on April 25th & 26th.) In future Alki editions, we hope to highlight our Library Ambassadors and what they are doing to promote WLA conferences, classes, and membership, so you could be a media sensation. And you will have an extra ribbon to add to your conference name tag. What a deal! But most of all, you will know that you are truly an active member of WLA.

To volunteer as a Library Ambassador, contact the WLA offices at 425-967-0739 or email Becky Shaddox, Assistant Director.
content of the information used. The skills of information literacy and the users' experience are interwoven. Information literacy is not the accomplishment of a series of objectives alone, but the application of those skills to establish a knowledge base from which to apply problem solving to issues of social responsibility. It is a lifelong learning process by which a person navigates through life to solve intentional and interest-based information needs. The patron's perspective of this phenomenon, developed over time and experienced reality varies, as does meaningful learning. It is shaped by the discursive practice of school and transcended by the combination of the information search process with genuine interest in the content of the information that is sought and encountered. Serendipitous information encountering can be an enriching addition for some information seekers, adding value to their searches. Patrons at various stages of information seeking experience a variety of thoughts and emotions as they experience the phenomenon of researching, making the patron perspective variable at different stages of the process, yet similar at all educational levels.

Notes
THE PATRONS SPEAK

Since this issue of Alki is focused on the patron perspective, we decided to ask some library patrons to share their thoughts about what their libraries mean to them. We received a wide range of contributions, from library patrons of all ages, all over the state. Here is a selection. –Ed.

The Evolving Patron
by Marnie DelCarmen
Tacoma

Free writing workshop with New York Times bestselling author, the flyer at the Bellevue Regional Library announced. As a struggling author, I was intrigued by the title. I attended the seminar with trepidation, but I met wonderful people with similar interests, and the library was the matchmaker.

I am now forty-five years old, and looking back, the library has played a role in shaping my life.

In junior high, my bossy older sister was a page at Newport Way Library in Bellevue. I used to tease her about being square, but I’d go down there to bug her, and it was a comfortable and safe place to read a book, and fall asleep in the blue chairs. She also brought home a paycheck, which made me jealous.

When our computer went out, I taught my parents how to log onto the library machines so they could harvest their e-mails from friends in the Philippines, our native country. My parents have accents, and there is a program called Talk Time which helps immigrants speak English clearly, so they can make their way in this nation, and be understood.

I’ve moved a long way from Bellevue, but I still work there, and books on CD keep my sanity when I meet traffic on Interstate 405—that’s coming and going home from work! I listen to Janet Evanovich novels and they make me laugh and take my mind off what’s happening. I think we could all use more smiles on the highways.

I’m searching for a job closer to home, and Résumé Assistance, at the Federal Way Library, sharpened my job-hunting tools. As I travel through King County, it’s wonderful seeing libraries because they are my friends, safe havens from a chaotic world.

On a more serious note, children can research something they are curious about and collect thoughts. Because I spend most of my budget on gas, with a little money left over, I’ll buy CDs, talking books, etc. The dispenser of DVDs is a constant background noise in the Bonney Lake Library.

When I fully retired, as I substitute taught for many years, I became a Friend of the Bonney Lake Library. I realize just how many different kinds of programs the library offers—classes on computers and on college financing, and other programs that the Friends arrange for and many times pay for, with funds we raise from book sales.

The library is an invaluable resource to our community—and I am glad its role has greatly expanded since I patronized it during my youth.

Changes in the Library since the 1950s
by Sharon Hodgins
Lake Tapps

I grew up in Aberdeen in the 1950s, and until I graduated from high school in 1963, I was a constant patron of the library. What has most changed about the library since then, and maybe it was only true of Aberdeen, is that we didn’t have a wide selection of “popular” books to read. I remember being exposed to Nancy Drew, but when I asked the children’s librarian if the library had Nancy Drew books, she kind of “sniffed” and said they did not carry them—as if Nancy Drew was not library material.

During my work years as a teacher, I did little recreational reading—because I always seemed to be reading for a class, or reading papers to grade. It was a pleasurable indulgence for me to sit down with a book and read what I wanted; even then, I tried to read fiction that related to my field.

My biggest pleasure upon retiring was going to our local library and starting with A in fiction. Libraries today make available a huge amount of popular fiction, compared to what I remember being available during my youth. Also, to my surprise, the library loans a lot of other media: videos (now DVDs), CDs, talking books, etc. The dispenser of DVDs is a constant background noise in the Bonney Lake Library.

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Conversation Club
by Louise Davison
Volunteer, Neill Public Library
Pullman

The patron group I represent is unique and might seem an odd bunch to even be regulars at the vibrant Neill Public Library in Pullman. That is because they are all second-language speakers—and readers—of English. The library has an extensive collection of media and films and, of course, children’s books and programs, all of which the ESL Conversation Club members do take

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advantage of. But they come twice weekly to our friendly and accommodat-
ing setting to hone their English skills, increase their vocabularies, sometimes
work on the finer points of grammar, but mostly to comfortably discuss our
various cultures and personal perspectives. Neill is a microcosmic melting pot!

Because Washington State University’s main campus is located in Pullman,
there is an enormous international population—a true boon to the southeast-
erm part of the state. There is an excellent ESL program at the university, but
it is both expensive and impossible to schedule with graduate or post-doctoral
duties, or if you are a spouse with preschool children. Neill provides these
individuals (representing twenty-five countries in the past two years) with an
opportunity to practice English, share personal and cultural stories, and most
significant of all—to make friends. They are all, after all, foreigners in a strange
land. Laughter and empathy is our common native language.

Here in their words (the basis of a future “lesson”) are their impressions of this
valuable community offering.

“ESL is a excellent space to improve english language conversation. It is an
enviroment very dinamic and pleasure. The issues of discussion are very
interesting from view point cultural. In these months, my knowledge about
different cultural aspect[s] had increased. It also improve the tolerance and
relationships.” [Peru]

“The conversation lessons helped us learning english without boring, and
helped us learn culture. It was provided us [the opportunity to] recognise
each other...We are also in contact with each other and the learning process is
continue...and our frienship is also forever.” [Turkey]

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The Public Library

by Kathleen Smith

Roslyn

Summers when I was ten or eleven, we’d begin the day early, picking strawberries. At noon we’d stop and eat peanut butter sandwiches in the shade. Then an hour or two more of washing and packing berries. After that, my time was my own. Since it was too hot to fish, I read. Once a week I’d walk the mile to the post office where the county bookmobile was parked. I’d check out the maximum six books and start again. Those summers I read mostly historical fiction. I remember Johnny Tremain and The Witch of Blackbird Pond—other times and other places making my small-town world a lot bigger.

When I fifteen, my parents moved us to Spokane when summer started. We hated city life, didn’t know anybody yet, and school hadn’t started. But the public library was just a block and half away. That summer I read more seriously: Thomas Merton, T.S. Eliot, Graham Greene, Francois Mauriac, and all the volumes of Kristen Lavransdatter. By the time school started, I was ready for the advanced English class that eased the way into a new school.

Most of my adult life, I stayed out of public libraries, building my own collection from secondhand book stores and publisher’s discount catalogs. Then time came to retire and downsize. My first stop in the new small town was the public library, again only a block and half from my house.

The library had free Internet until I got mine hooked up. They took my overflow of books, too much for my new and smaller abode. They had writers’ groups and readers’ groups, where I could meet folks as passionate about books as I am. They had the only copy machines in town, and lectures on forest fires and wolves. They had children’s story time and a used book sale. They even had a Halloween party as a fundraiser. Once I came in and found the librarian looking up directions for a lost traveler.

The public library has been the touchstone for my transitions for more than fifty years. Wherever you live, and whatever changes you go through, I hope you are lucky enough to have one close to you.

Libraries Save Lives!

by Michael Symonds

Prosser

Perhaps my title goes a bit too far, but it is not far from the truth. As a little girl, I loved checking out books weekly at the bookmobile. The smell of our large Mexican woven-grass magenta and purple book bag meant comfort and excitement—the comfort of the “library” and the excitement of seeing new books and learning new things. I adored both stories and non-fiction—about dinosaurs, the solar system, cat and dog breeds, etc. I learned to love reading thanks to the library.

In middle and high school, the school library did save me. A quiet and non-disruptive student, some teachers would allow me to go to the library after finishing my work. Those libraries provided a haven. In high school, I escaped languishing in a class where I had finished the work. In middle school, they gave me a space where I felt safe and untroubled.

As a middle-aged adult, I feel thrilled to live near a library. Ever since my children were toddlers we have enjoyed going to the library together. Now that they are entering their teens, we still do. When they were younger, we went at least twice a week to do crafts, go to storytelling time, and look at and check out books. The library helped me show them how we can find answers to our questions. One time when my oldest son was four, he asked me a question. I paused, and he immediately said: “We have to go to the library, right?” Right. His response amused and delighted me; he knew that we don’t need to know all the answers; we only need to know where to look for them. They also know the library as a place to discover new questions.

Apart from benefits libraries offer in raising children (books, programming, and communal space), the library has enriched me personally. I learned about a book club at our library, and that group is a community for me. The Mid-Columbia Library’s resources in particular have enhanced greatly my quality of life. The MCL’s many branches translate into a large collection from which I often find books. When the system has not carried a book I wanted, I have been able to order books. And although I am a near-devotee of printed books, a friend recently persuaded me to buy an MP3 player in order to download audio books. Being able to listen to books when I garden, walk, or cook has made my life feel less hectic and more satisfying.

The library has saved my life and continues to do so. Given how much I have relied on it as a parent, it has probably saved my kids’ lives as well! Life would be grim and dull without a public library. The library was where I learned to love books—and learning. Nothing is more life-saving than loving learning because it is what we need not only to survive, but also to live fulfilling lives.

Do You Like Books?

by Theo Stafford, age nine

Sumas

The library is the coolest place on earth. I go to the library about once a week. I usually take out twenty books at a time. I also take out magazines, and sometimes videos. I read about one hundred books a month! If you heard how many books I take out, my Mom takes out at least a hundred more than I do! We go to the Fort Langley library, Vancouver libraries (Kitsilano, Firehall, and downtown), and Lynden, Bellingham, and Sumas.

I special order lots of books. Special ordering books is about making sure that you find the right book. You can type in the keyword but I usually type in the author. And then there’s the topics. But I think you get the point. I was so surprised when I first special ordered books at the Lynden library that they had a folder just for me! My folder was sitting on a shelf right by everybody else’s special orders. It was so cool to see so many different books from different libraries.

Librarians are very nice because they always help you find a book that you’re looking for. I tell the librarian that I need a book and she shows me where it
is. I chat with the librarian to find out how their day was.

When you walk in the doors of the library, everything is different from outside. You have to be really quiet, nobody looks at you or talks to you, and you’re just there reading or looking at books. Or if the library computers are free, sometimes you just want to sit down and have some action while you’re sitting in this quiet place. The computers have action games. Just type in stuff like “Action games” or “Adventure games” into Google and they pop up right in front of you.

When I see a book that I really wanted for a long time, I get really excited and I really want to get it. When I get home with my books, I think “No! I’m never going to read them in time!” But I do read most of them; or as I like to say, almost all of them.

There are two different kinds of books; if you can’t read so well, picture books are better for you. But if you’re dying to read more, I would recommend chapter books. I like chapter books because you get way more fun out of them. When I read non-fiction I kind of get bored, but it kind of seems fun, too. There’s some really cool stuff in them. I like the book 100 Inventions. I learned so much about inventions through the ages. I like the machine gun that looks like a cannon. Whenever I look at this book, I always think to myself “I want to try to make an invention!”

I like chapter books, silly story books, and comic story books. Whenever my Mom and I read a Max Lucado book, my Mom cries way too hard to even read it to me—and I’m laughing too hard to even listen! I love the Wizard of Oz series. I’ve read Tik-Tok of Oz, The Emerald City of Oz, and The Magic of Oz. In these stories there’s a little hen that has so many kids that you could never count them and she named them all Dorothy! Cap’n Bill, which is another character, he’s got a “meat leg!” Which is, of course, skin. My Mom and I always laugh so hard over these books, and I hope to read them all.

When I heard my first book, I was only three months old. My Mom made me a little quilt-bed that I lay on while she read to me. When I first started reading by myself, I was reading one of my favorite kinds of chapter books. I got tired of reading one chapter a night—I wanted to hear more! So I walked up the stairs of our house and I sat at the top of the stairs and I read five chapters to myself in one sitting! Then I thought to myself “This is so cool!” and I finished that book and I started on the next. I don’t know how many chapters I read that day, but all I know is that I’ve been reading non-stop ever since.

A Little Extra
by Zoe Wright
Brinnon

The library has always been one of my favorite places. Since I learned to read, a day hasn’t gone by that I haven’t had a book. I am a sixteen-year-old girl who loves to read and to write. I see the library as a dynamic and diverse place to find knowledge and experiences. I think it’s a place that can and should have every kind of knowledge available, for every age group. And I think that this knowledge should range from the facts and intricacies of the written word, to the ability to teach youth and teens of a community skills

that will make them valuable to the community, whether these skills be art or decision-making. The thing that I want to change the most about libraries is their seeming inability to listen to teens.

My local library set up a program a few years ago that tried to allow teens to have a say in what programs the library did; how to run these programs; and how to promote them for the most success. I had high hopes for this program, and it did try. It struggled through three different leaders, was given up on as too much work, and simply decayed into asking teens what kind of food should be provided, and what color napkins that food should be served on. I have nothing against food, or napkins; I just think it would be a spectacular experience for a teen to be allowed to help think up a program, and find out what goes into making it a success. This opportunity shouldn’t be given up because it takes a bit more effort.

I have spoken with multiple people at the library about my ideas. Every time, I got vague responses that usually led to their forgetting what the idea was in the first place. I didn’t feel like I was even being heard. After two years of this flawed communication, I gave up. I understand fully that there are limitations to what library staff can do for programs; I understand these are hard to explain, and I understand that it’s difficult to convince teens to try new things or actually get word out. However, I was severely disappointed that I couldn’t even get someone to explain to me what part of my ideas couldn’t be done. It frustrated and annoyed me.

In my observations, the library is leaving a huge gap between the “tween” age group (ages ten to thirteen) and the adult group. And this missing group is a group that should be very important to a library. It is a group that needs life skills; skills that I would think a library could help provide. Listening to teens, treating them as adults and equals, and knowing that they’re capable of understanding more than they’re generally given credit for, would be of great benefit not only to the libraries, but to the culture and people in general.
The Ballard Landmark: A Library Transformed in a Year

by Greg Bem

The Landmark, the Library, and the Residents

Located in the heart of Old Ballard, the Ballard Landmark is a retirement living facility for hundreds of residents. Tucked away in a corner near the main entrance is the Landmark’s library. With a collection of over one thousand print books, audio books, regularly rotated magazines, and a plethora of local resources, the library is an intimate and regularly used part of the facility. Within feet of the main collection is furniture for reading and lounging, a piano for evening performances, and the entrance to the first-floor patio. The information heart of the facility is broken into two halves by an open walkway, and just around the corner from the main library is the common area, which features two computer workstations, complete with printers, games, and puzzles, a collection of mass market paperback books, and a dining space with many chairs and tables for social activities.

There are many residents who use the library and nearby spaces. Some of the residents can be considered regulars of this Information Ground. Some have even taken on curatorial and organizational roles to ensuring the wellbeing of the library and its collection. Many residents of the Ballard Landmark are regular readers and use the facility primarily for literature and daily reading. Other residents do not visit often but are warmly invited to use the library. The library does not have a circulation system in place and could be simply described as a “free for all.” The library collection is developed through donations by residents and volunteers, and the collection is currently not fully cataloged. Many residents donate their personal book collections to the library in some capacity upon their arrival to the library. Magazines are donated by residents each month. The residents make use of the computer workstations for basic and advanced functions: checking email is a regular activity; however, information retrieval for personal research is common. Many residents have their own computers in their rooms on the ascending floors of the Landmark and do not need to use the workstations for the computers. The common area is often used by residents for small talk, but it is also the center for various events, including poetry readings, live music, and talks. The common area is also where residents gather with their mobile devices, such as iPads and other tablets, and to engage in educational discussion with each other.

While the library and the attached common area are not often heavily populated with residents outside of special events, they are consistently used and updated with new materials often enough to encourage revisiting. As will be described, the volunteers have been active in promoting the library as a space for cultural and social exchange.

The Library Volunteers and Their Involvement

In the fall of 2011, four first-year MLIS students from the iSchool at the University of Washington were recruited to start regularly volunteering at the library at the Ballard Landmark. They conducted a partial use assessment of the library, interviewing residents, analyzing the collection and the organizational methods used by the residents in the stacks. The volunteers began their involvement with the library by reorganizing the book collection by genre (Mystery, Romance, Fiction, Large Print, Nonfiction, Religion, Science and Health), and by format (book, reference/oversize, magazine, audio book). Significant weeding was conducted and continues to this day. The original state of the library was disorganized, and we took it upon ourselves to ensure the most ideal library space possible. While there were some residents who protested our changes in shelf arrangement, we encouraged them to test our changes before refusing them outright. As we would later find out, the residents who opposed our presence initially ended up enjoying the services we established.

A surface-level assessment of the computer workstations proved the workstations were in working condition but not up to contemporary standards. Signage was created to allow for ease of access. A “Returns and Donations” box was created to prevent the residents from re-shelving their own books. A schedule for volunteers was created, and the weekly time block was implemented into the facility-wide printed calendar, which the residents actively use to learn about weekly events within the Landmark. The volunteers are

“With new volunteers come new ideas that will further expand and develop the library and make its functions optimal to meeting the needs of the residents.”

Greg Bem is an online MLIS student at the University of Washington Information School.
available every Saturday from two to four p.m. and are referred to by the residents as “the librarians.”

Between the fall of 2011 and the fall of 2012, much evolved in the library. In addition to maintaining organization of the collection, as well as weeding the collection and being conscious of collection development practices, the volunteers have provided many in-person services to the residents. Each Saturday, the volunteers are available to provide readers’ advisory, technology instruction, assistance with transportation of information resources from other libraries, and general updates on the state of the library. Technology instruction ranges widely, from the recovery of lost passwords, to the uploading and downloading of digital photography, to the use of mobile devices and the applications therein. Detective work has also been performed for residents who are particular about certain items they had once seen in the library and could no longer find. In many cases, the volunteers have listened to residents simply describe stories from their long lives regarding a wide array of topics. On at least one location, the volunteers banded together to purchase new books for the collection from local book sales and have also put forward purchase orders for new supplies.

In the summer of 2012, the original four volunteers began several initiatives to expand upon the original services being offered to the residents through the library: a digital catalog of the library was outlined and put into the motion of creation by way of LibraryThing, a website for personal library collections; new ways of advertising new acquisitions of the collection; and a push to recruit new volunteers for the library. The LibraryThing process is ongoing and actively continues to this day. The volunteer recruitment was widely successful and the current contingent includes ten individuals, all MLIS students. The volunteers are still present at the library on Saturdays, and with the additional volunteers there have been, on average, two volunteers present for each shift, which has significantly increased productivity and assistance within the spaces.

**Going Forward**

Volunteering at the Ballard Landmark has provided each individual volunteer with invaluable experience, and the volunteers look forward to their presence within the library going forward. There are numerous plans for the future of the volunteer involvement with the library. The major plan is to create a systematized process for bringing new volunteers into the mix in order to allow other volunteers to move on to other projects and pursuits. At the beginning and end of each academic year, the volunteers plan on reaching out to their peers to find additional volunteers. With new volunteers come new ideas that will further expand and develop the library and make its functions optimal to meeting the needs of the residents. The current volunteers continue to use the LibraryThing catalog, which was started in the fall of 2012, and has been advertised to the residents as of the winter of 2013, which will allow for a quarterly check in which the library collection is evaluated and updated within LibraryThing. The volunteers have been brainstorming and are in the process of publishing a library newsletter for the patrons as a way to further reinforce the community. The volunteers would also like to expand their hours to a second day, if possible, potentially in the middle of the week in the evening, with the ability to offer storytime and other activities (in addition to the regular library services). Finally, the library volunteers have seen several new volunteers since the fall term and will be bringing on additional volunteers for transition purposes in the spring of 2013.

Current volunteers include Kim Baker, Greg Bem, Rachael C. Black, Erin Boyington, Susan Fitch, Gina Kessler, Casey Lasinger, Christine Malinowski, Shannon Moller, Emily Small, and Sue Wozniak.

**Notes**

1. An Information Ground is “an environment temporarily created when people come together for a singular purpose but from whose behavior emerges a social atmosphere that fosters the spontaneous and serendipitous sharing of information.”
The Pend Oreille County Library District, a member of the Cooperative Information Network consortium, on April 30, 2012 migrated to the Koha open source integrated library system. The CIN contracted with ByWater Solutions for its migration and maintenance of Koha. POCLD and the CIN previously used Exlibris Voyager for their ILS through the Washington Idaho Network consortium.

Recently a patron donated a fine first edition of Tom Robbins’s 1984 book Jitterbug Perfume for sale in the Anacortes Public Library bookstore. The Friends of the APL contacted Robbins and he agreed to sign it, greatly increasing its value. The book will be sold by silent auction in the APL bookstore during the month of March. The high bid as of March 31, 2013 will get the book. The book is available for viewing in the library bookstore at 1220 10th St. in Anacortes.

More people than ever before signed up for Pierce County Library System cards during the Library’s sixth annual library card drive in October 2012, welcoming a record 10,555 new card holders. Following the card drive a record 251,034 people have Pierce County Library cards. In addition to visiting schools in the service area and issuing cards to students, the most significant success during the card drive was a partnership pilot program with Franklin Pierce Schools. Library staff worked to get a card into the hand of every student who did not already have a Pierce County Library card. They issued cards to a total of 5,278 kids—about three-quarters of all of the students in the district.

Nadean Meyer Earns Five Merit Awards

Nadean Meyer, Learning Resources Librarian for the Eastern Washington University Libraries, was the recipient of not one, but five Merit Awards for 2012. In addition, Nadean was the only faculty member to receive the President’s Award.

“We are proud of Nadean and her accomplishments,” said Ted Otto, Interim Dean of Libraries. “I commend her for her level of service and for an extraordinary year.”

The Merit Award program recognizes and rewards outstanding contributions made by EWU faculty in teaching, scholarship, creative endeavors, and services. The winners are chosen by EWU’s Research, Service and Scholarship Committee. Nadean was selected as one of ten recipients of: 1) the Outstanding Faculty Award in Teaching, 2) the Outstanding Faculty Award in Service, and 3) the Outstanding Faculty Award in Scholarship/Creative Works. These awards recognize excellence in the relevance, significance, and positive impacts of teaching, service, and scholarship/creative work practices.

In addition, she was named one of the Professor of the Year award winners, honoring faculty who have made the greatest contributions to the university through outstanding performance in two or more categories of teaching, scholarship/creative works, and/or service. Of all the Professor of the Year award winners, Nadean was also named the President’s Award recipient, recognizing her as having made the greatest individual contribution to the university through outstanding performance in two or more categories of teaching, scholarship/creative works, and/or service in 2012.

During 2011–12, Nadean had several featured projects including: a Maurice Sendak exhibit and programs with the Jewish community, embedded instruction with the Athletic Training program for evidence-based clinical practice research skills, the acquisition of K–12 databases for education students, and a Native American Youth resources grant and project with local tribes.
Tha Gnu Weigh 2 Spel
by Bruce Greeley

Seemingly centuries ago, I started out with the King County Library System as a librarian with a special late-night teen program in Burien (ESCAPE!), one of the perks of which was to be able to go down to Tower Records—what’s that, you ask?—every so often to buy new CDs for the youth. Rap was all the rage at the time, and the kids would tell me the names of groups to look for. I was soon stumped by how to find these groups: on the one hand, the artists themselves are so lackadaisical about the form of their names: it could be 2Tupac or 2Pac or whatpac.

On the other: Just how did you spell their names? How about when these teens told me to go down and buy the latest by (what I thought was) Enemy. I looked all through the Es but it was not to be found. Why? Because they are NME. (I thought they were articulating it a bit too precisely!)

So, anyway, time marches on, but this predicament of odd spellings and listings for music groups in particular continues to command my attention. And some of these artists continue to frustrate me (and maybe many of you, too).

For instance, tell me: The first time some scruffy kid came up to you at the reference desk asking if you had any M&M, did you think to show him the section on candy? Before Eminem became the big movie star and we all knew about him, I mean!

Now let me interject here by saying that I am not a cataloguer but some of my best friends are (yeah, right!), and I admire the hard job they have with some of these examples I’m going to cite, especially in the electronic format.

Like what about that group, The The? Now, I’m quite the pacifist but doesn’t this just make you want to resort to violence that someone could abuse the concept of “stop words” so egregiously? Incredibly, our new cataloging system, Evergreen, can find the group by searching these once-oh-so-forbidden stop words.

Now I’m not sure I’ve ever even heard this band and I don’t think they’re in many library catalogues—but if they were—does anyone else question how you’re going to find ? and the Mysterians? Or that crucial drummer for The Roots who goes by the name of Questlove. For the non-cataloguers out there, would this come before A or Z or what? Or perhaps more importantly, how do you even refer to these folks? Was it Question mark and the Mysterians” and “Questlove” or “Questionlove” or “Question-mark -uestlove” or what?! Good question, eh?

Or what about this techno guy, µ-Ziq? That lead letter is not a “U” but the Greek letter, “Mu,” which means his name is pronounced, very cutely, as “Music.” Now, I don’t know about you, but I have a hard time just finding Greek letters on my computer keyboard, let alone trying to figure out where to alphabetize them!

But these are comparatively easy ones, so far. What about Prince?

It’s a good thing he reverted to this royal nomenclature—remember how he changed his name for a number of years to the symbol above, which I’m told is truly unpronounceable? Journalists took to calling him either “Squiggle” or “The Artist Formerly Known as Prince” or TAFKAP; which is quite the mouthful. I’m wondering now, though, that since he changed his name back if he should be called “The Artist Formerly Known as Squiggle...formerly known as Prince” [TAFNASFNAP]?

At KCLS at least, there is at least one reference to this name on a CD-ROM of his, titled “[Male/female symbol] interactive,” which I think is cutting corners a bit.

This, too, reminds me of a t-shirt I once saw in a window in Edmonds with this image, and underneath was written “Male, female, Nabisco.” (Catalog that one!)

But also, I know how important antecedents and roots are for librarians, and even more important is citing sources, especially if they’re from scholarly tomes. So I must digress again and tell you about what I think must be the origin of my fascination with these themes, and refer to a true classic of literature written by a world renowned Doctor...Geisel, or something.

When I was very young I would visit some neighbors and was always quite

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mesmerized by one book, On Beyond Zebra—I’d imagine what letters really could have come after Z—and look at some of the symbols that Seuss devised for this.

More recently is another new band, Sigur Ros, from Iceland. Their name is simple enough, but how frustrating that one of their recent albums, without any words anywhere on the disc is titled ( ). In the KCLS catalog at least, this is not alphabetized before the As or after the Zs but in the Ps for parentheses. In our former catalog—even worse—this was alphabetized under “I”. Why? Because in parentheses—no, excuse me—in brackets after their title is the explanation i.e. parentheses!

Now despite what I’ve related so far about this obsession here, my favorite kind of music is actually jazz. And one of the wildest of the saxophonists is Mr. Anthony Braxton. His compositions are extremely complicated, and his titles for these keep getting more and more elaborate. I used to be a volunteer radio disc jockey and I once played this fantastic song:

but then was stymied as to how to say that on the air!

KCLS and even the liner notes to his albums usually refer to them as “Piece One” or “Composition no. 136” or whatever, which is a good thing because the song titles are only getting more & more complex; here’s some more:

And now he’s incorporating cartoons and even train cars (!) into his titles like:

Please note that Braxton is now writing songs to be played by musicians in different galaxies, so good luck keeping up with his endeavors!

To close, I want to return to music more prosaic, specifically the folk-rock artist Fiona Apple. KCLS lists one of her recent album titles as When the Pawn, but that’s not quite adequate. I think they cheated a little not to even put in an ellipsis after this heading. Because I think Ms. Apple belongs in the Guinness Book of World Records for longest album title, and I would love to see this really, completely catalogued.

Let’s all recite this together: Follow the bouncing ball:

When The Pawn Hits the Conflicts He Thinks Like A King What HeKnows Throwsthe Blows When He Goes to the Fight and He’ll Win The Whole Thing 'Fore He Enters the Ring There’s No Body to Batter When Your Mind Is Your Might So When You Go Solo, You Hold Your Own Hand And Remember That Depth Is The Greatest Of Heights And If You Know Where You Stand, Then You Know Where To Land And If You Fall It Won’t Matter, Cuz You’ll Know That You’re Right.

Whew.

For immediate release:

The 2013 Society Gaius Julius Solinus v. Washingtonius will be meeting during the WLA/OLA conference (April 24–26) in Vancouver, WA. The exact time and location will be posted with the rest of the conference schedule on the WLA website.

If you will be attending the conference this year, please consider this Esteemed Society’s call for papers and presentations. We hope you will consider joining the illustrious ranks of fellow librarians, info-jockeys, and people who wandered by the hallway hoping for free beer, as they present their carefully considered, inconclusive, and completely irreproducible research.

Please contact K. Edwards (kirstedw@kcls.org), co-President of the Society Gaius Julius etc. if you, your designated representative, evil twin, or zombified remnant wishes to present. Due to the prestigious nature of the Society, requests-to-present made any later than five minutes prior to the event will not be considered.

Unless you bring beer.
Makerspaces in Libraries: Patron’s Delight, Staff’s Dread?

by Betha Gutsche

Tinker, Maker, Learner

A makerspace is a space for making. As simplistic as that sounds, the topic of makerspaces is fueling a hot debate in the library field, viewed as a revolutionary shift in library service on one end of the opinion spectrum and as a superfluous techno-lusty distraction at the other end. Making is about participatory learning, about learning and exploring the creative process collaboratively and physically. The shift aligns with a global progression from the Information Age to the Imagination Age, to a culture that, as John Seely Brown posits, is receptive to learning anywhere, anytime through playing, tinkering, making, and doing. Makerspaces embody this transformation, and libraries are positioned to be at its hub. Maxine Bleiweis, director of the Westport (Connecticut) Public Library, describes it as a movement in libraries “from collection development to connection development.”

For those who fear the mess and the moil of an active space in the library where people are making things and learning and sharing, just think of the children’s or teen’s section in a typical public library. It doesn’t seem at all radical to watch youngsters and teens cutting, pasting, sculpting, computer-designing, video-making, and generally finding ways to incorporate making into their learning. Why not extend the making environment in the library to all ages?

A Catalytic Technology

At the nub of the makerspace evolution is a disruptive technology—the 3D printer. 3D printing, also called rapid prototyping or additive manufacturing, is manufacturing gone digital. It is a technology that renders a digital design file as a three-dimensional real-world object. Although 3D printing machines for industry have been around for almost thirty years, they are now bursting into the personal printer market. Prices once in the $100K range have dropped below $1500 for home printer models, with forecasts of $500 or less just around the corner. The ability to design and print an object is now in the hands of anyone. In fact, it’s not even necessary to be a designer; with free databases like MakerBot’s Thinfiverse, a user can pick a ready-made design and have it printed. Many predict that 3D printers will be ubiquitous in five to ten years, as common as desktop printers are today, triggering as big a cultural shift as the Internet. While attending the 3D Printshow London 2012, Christopher Barnatt, Associate Professor of Computing and Future Studies at Nottingham University Business School, observed, “This reminds me of walking around a PC show back in 1987; at that time personal computers had clearly not transformed the world but the foundation had been laid. It’s the same thing here today.”

To comprehend the basic process of 3D printing, it helps to start with a familiar frame of reference. How Stuff Works likens “direct” 3D printing to a 2D inkjet printer: the nozzles “move back and forth dispensing a fluid” on a surface. Unlike 2D printing, the nozzles also move up and down to build up layers of material, and the nozzle is spewing plastic polymers or waxes rather than ink. An object is created by laying down successive layers of material. This direct printing method is the common technique for the lower-priced personal printers.

Seeing is understanding. The MASIE Learning LAB created a four-minute video of an experiment with a Cubify 3D Printer which demonstrates the process clearly and briefly. Probably the best way to grasp the reality of how the personal level of 3D printing works is to find the makerspace nearest you and go try if for yourself. Adventure in 3D Printland is an account of my foray into the expanding universe of replication.

Maker Culture in the Library

It is one leap of understanding to accept that the science fiction of the Star Trek replicator is essentially a here-and-now reality; it’s another leap to understand how and why libraries may want to catch a ride on this disruptive wave. Artist Thomas Gokey, who has taught an “Innovation in Public Libraries” class at the Fayetteville (New York) Free Library, offers a compelling insight into this radical but tangible shift in his ten-minute video on Public Libraries, 3D Printing, Fab Labs and Hackerspaces. “What we’re talking about here is the democratization of the means of production,” Gokey enthuses. Creating a space for 3D printing in the library “where people gather to share their knowledge and help each other” aligns naturally with the deep history of public libraries as engines of democracy and centers of discovery.

Westport Public Library waded in cautiously, testing the waters of community response. Before committing to setting up their own maker space, they collaborated with local enthusiasts to stage a Mini Maker Faire. Anticipating about six hundred visitors, they attracted twenty-two hundred visitors, many of whom had never considered using the public library. They felt they had tapped a nerve of public interest, a hunger for creating and collaborating. Neil Gershenfeld of MIT...
The Learning Curve

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observes that “learning in these spaces is often driven by the demand for knowledge, as opposed to the supply of knowledge.”

Fayetteville Free Library (FFL) claims to be the first library to have ventured forth across this new frontier by installing a 3D printer for patron use and creating its FabLab (fabulous laboratory) makerspace. However, “it’s not about a 3D printer,” FFL Director Sue Considine says emphatically. “It’s about providing access to the process of making; it’s the idea of moving toward a read/write culture where people are creating culture rather than just consuming it.” The emphasis is on the community of people sharing and making with each other, rather than on the technology, though the breakthroughs in new technologies elevate the making to an enticing and challenging level.

The Sky is Falling

For library staff, especially for those who manage staff training, it’s only human to have the Chicken Little response to such a technological upheaval. One library training director admitted that the idea filled me with dread trying to figure out how staff intensive it would be to try to support it in a library!” That response reflects a more widespread reaction of library staff when faced with significant change—the natural fear that big problems will result, for which they will lack the expertise to find solutions.

Others have voiced skepticism about a library’s capacity to make it work. In the words of one respondent to a recent WebJunction poll on 3D printers in the library, “3D printers are super fun, but without the design skills and software required to put them to practical use, I see them being of limited value to public libraries...Making meaningful use of this technology is no small project.”

The unfamiliar territory raises a legion of questions. How big are the printers? Would we need to have them in a special room? How noisy are they? Does the process produce a lot of dust or fumes? Is there special training required to run the printer? Would we have to train all our IT staff as well as our Library Technical Assistants to use and maintain the printers? What about the 3D design software?

The early adopter libraries are forging bravely ahead into the unknown, leading the way and demonstrating the possibilities. They have shared their experiences through webinars and online articles. Each has developed its own approach, and all of them are continuing to push the boundaries and discover what works. Here are a few examples.

Creating space for the makerspace:

- Fayetteville Free Library was able to locate its FabLab in a previously unused space, which was formerly (and appropriately) part of the Stickley Furniture factory, renowned makers in the Arts and Crafts movement. Aside from the 3D printer, the emphasis is on media and software tools: digital cameras, podcasting equipment, and photo, audio, and video editing software.

- The Allen County (Indiana) Public Library partnered with local nonprofit Techventure, which parked its fifty-foot mobile classroom makerspace in the library parking lot. The mini-industrial space includes a CNC router (computer-controlled cutting machine), a 3D printer, a lathe, saws, an electronics bench, and an injection molding machine.

- The Westport Public Library chose to plunk its makerspace right down in the middle of the library where the activity is always on view for patrons. The 3D Makerbot printer is complemented by lower-tech shop tools and a predilection for building model airplanes.

Training and empowering library staff and volunteers:

- Fayetteville Free Library’s FabLab was sparked by the enthusiasm of Lauren Britton when she was an MLIS student/intern eager to explore the future potential of libraries. Lauren developed proficiency in the 3D design software and formed a transliteracy team to train other interested staff. Patrons can “check out” a librarian for a one-on-one introduction to the MakerBot. Director Sue Considine had “honest conversations” internally with staff about their fears and reluctance, before announcing the makerspace to the community. For the most part, staff members need only enough knowledge to help patrons log on and off the printer software. Many patrons arrive with expertise and share peer-to-peer. At the low-tech end of maker culture, an eleven-year-old patron offered his own class on how to make things out of duct tape.

- At the Westport Public Library makerspace, there is a maker-in-residence, an enthusiast from the maker community who welcomed the opportunity to share his knowledge and the joys of maker culture. Every week, the library offers drop-in training on the 3D printer Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from four to six p.m. They have an ongoing invitation to community members to get involved as makers at various levels: “We are looking for tinkerers, inventors, and creators to share their project(s)” in an open public environment.

- Tech Central at the Cleveland Public Library started out with “simple making,” enabling staff members to work their way up the learning curve toward complexity. Lacking maker “experts,” they drew on the diverse skills and interests of staff members, such as photography, music, English, meteorology, or art, and created learner labs drawn from these strengths. They also gave staff time off desk to try new things and play. Some chose to take 3D design
classes or to learn the 3D printing software. It’s an ongoing hands-on learning environment. Patrons are also introduced to making on a simple level.

More resources:

This only scratches the surface of the paradigm-shifting potential of makerspaces and 3D printers. For more information, check out following resources:

- **Maker Librarian** is an Ontario librarian who has been involved in maker culture since 2009.
- **What is a Makerspace? Creativity in the Library** more of the basics of makerspaces.
- **Learn About Makerspaces from the Innovators** view archives from the ALA TechSource series; featured library makerspaces are: Westport Public Library, Cleveland Public Library, Detroit Public Library, and Carnegie Library (Pittsburgh).
- **Made in a Library** webinar archive from the OCLC/Library Journal innovation series featuring the FabLab at Fayetteville Free Library.
- **3D Printing Resources** articles and videos from Explaining the Future, “a future shaper’s toolbox” by Christopher Barnatt of Nottingham University Business School.
- **Metrix Create:Space** see for yourself what a makerspace is like (in Seattle on Capitol Hill).

3D MakerBot; caption: MakerBot is a popular desktop 3D printer. The “build envelope,” or maximum size of the object to be printed, is a 4.5-inch cube.

3D MCE-making; caption: The printer head deposits heated plastic through a nozzle to build up layers of the cookie cutter object being printed.

3D MCE-cutters; caption: The final product is a 2-part cookie cutter in the shape of an M.C. Escher flying fish. The outline (right) cuts the cookie dough and the embosser (left) imprints the fish design on the surface.
Reading about Readers

by David Wright

Anyone who has ever seen my desk at work (or at home, for that matter) can tell you that I love to be surrounded by books. Some of my favorites are bookish books: books about books, and about readers and reading, which is the real subject of our work in libraries, after all. Here are some favorites from my recently read pile.

I’m fascinated about how our species wound up human, and I recently enjoyed Ian Tattersall’s Masters of the Planet: The Search for Our Human Origins, a wonderful introduction to the latest in paleoanthropology for the layman which suggests that our definitive step into humanity—the difference that made the difference—was the rather late-breaking development of symbolic thinking. This was the perfect jumping-off place for Brian Boyd’s On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition and Fiction, an absolutely wonderful book that hit the perfect sweet spot for me between wonky science and touchy-feely lit-crit. Boyd’s insights on the civilizing and humanizing influence of stories on our particular branchlet of the primate tree—a gospel regularly preached by readers’ advisors—are backed up with plenty of thought-provoking research into the biological bases for narrative. If you’re weary of post-postmodern literary criticism’s navel-gazing ways, Boyd drops you back down into the bracing atmosphere of science.

Building on a firm Darwinian foundation, Boyd persuasively shows how it was our knack for extrapolating reality into representations—stories—that accounts for the extraordinary success of what a few hundred thousand years ago was an endangered prey species living on the margins of zoology. He also offers sound insights on what makes some stories especially popular and enduring, using Homer and Dr. Seuss as convincing object lessons. (Lisa Cron’s Wired for Story: The Writer’s Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook Readers from the Very First Sentence is largely a gloss and a practicum of Boyd and his sources.)

Offering a completely different but also refreshingly original take on literary criticism, Lauren Leto’s Judging a Book by its Lover: A Field Guide to the Hearts and Minds of Readers Everywhere gives the often pretentious field of letters and literacy a welcome goose in its pompous posterior. Sending up the crushing banalities of the publishing world and book reviewers’ worst clichés (Steve Hely’s satiric How I Became a Famous Novelist is very good at this too), reveling in guilty pleasures while both spoofing and feeding our pretensions by providing tips on how to pretend you’ve read a wide range of authors, Leto shares the dirt on book clubs, how to get lucky in a bookstore, and how we preen via our bookshelves. As someone who spends many of his waking hours communicating with all kinds of readers, I especially enjoyed Leto’s snarky yet loving exegesis not of books, but of readers, typed by their favorite authors. If you’ve ever correctly identified a fan of David Foster Wallace, Charles Bukowski, or Jane Austen at fifty paces, you’ll find much to snicker over here, recognizing your patrons’ readerly foibles and your own.

From the ridiculous to the sublime: each year brings a fresh bushel of reading memoirs, many of which are rousing sermons for the choir, but David Shields’s How Literature Saved My Life takes the reading memoir in a different direction, and is of the best and most interesting of these I’ve ever read. If you’re not familiar with this Seattle writer’s other works (The Thing about Life is One Day You’ll be Dead, etc.), get ready for some of the most deeply personal writing out there. Shields stirs up scads of interesting titles in his wake—you’ll probably finish with a list of things you want to read—but his main subject is that essential longing within himself, the existential crisis which literature attempts to address and alleviate. Its brilliant and beautiful failure to do so emerges as something that truly matters, one of the best things about life. Shields’s approach isn’t for everyone, but for me he strikes a powerful chord, poignant and unresolved, circuitously and irreverently moving towards the sacred.

If there’s one book I wish all public librarians would read, it is the terrific Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries and Community by Catherine Ross, Lynne McKechnie and Paulette Rothbauer. Ross et al. survey the wide field of cross-disciplinary reading research (as of 2004: I do hope this title gets a second edition some time), offering sound data on many topics of great interest to the librarian and teacher, from literacy, book discovery, the role of reading in people’s lives, and the role of libraries in literacy and reading culture. There is just enough detail to be truly informative, and ample references serve as a jumping-off point to more in-depth research. I return to this one every so often and continue to learn things.

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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