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Cultivating Interest in Interest Groups

by Nancy Ledeboer

Recently I was at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon where the new president declared “this is not your father’s chamber.” My initial thought was that she stole my line. How often have I said we’re “not your mother’s library” or even “not your grandmother’s library?” I still find people who are surprised to hear about the programs, online resources and learning opportunities that the library offers.

“This…how do we create a structure that welcomes and engages library staff from all types of libraries serving in a wide variety of roles?”

This got me thinking about WLA. Are we evolving as an association to meet the changing needs of our members? As the roles of library staff evolve, are we flexible in responding with relevant programming and continuing education? As we welcome millennials into our workforce, are we embracing the idealism and collaborative work style that they bring to our libraries and to the association?

The board is exploring to ensure that WLA remains relevant to you, our members. Susan Lee and Jeanne Fondrie, our Interest Group coordinators, formed a task force to look at how other library associations are adapting. They invited Interest Group chairs to talk with members about how well the current structure meets their needs.

In our member survey last year, we heard from people who want to get involved. However, they have not found an Interest Group that represents their “community of interest.” We also heard from members that in some cases the Interest Group they joined is not very active. I’ve talked to library staff that only join WLA to get reduced registration to conferences. So how do we create a structure that welcomes and engages library staff from all types of libraries serving in a wide variety of roles?

In the past Interest Groups have been the first place where members connected and interacted with other members who shared a common interest. A few Interest Groups have faded away and new ones representing broader areas of interest such as leadership or adult programming have taken their place. Ideally each Interest Group holds regular meetings where members can network, share best practices and discuss emerging issues. I invite you to share your ideas about what type of Interest Groups would appeal to you and what value you want to receive from your participation.

In this issue, you’ll be reading about a variety of issues related to intellectual freedom. This is an age old issue for libraries, and yet I suspect that it too is evolving. Recently I’ve been reading about seed libraries under attack for sharing seeds. Who would have thought that we’d be defending the right to share seeds? Today we have many types of libraries serving diverse communities across our state. We must adapt and be flexible in our approach to intellectual freedom challenges. There is no one way to serve and meet the needs of our members. It is through forums like Alki, Interest Group meetings and WLA conferences that we can learn from one another as we respond to changes in our libraries, our communities and our state.

If you have ideas for how WLA can adapt to provide more meaningful opportunities for you to grow, please send me an email or call me.

“We must adapt and be flexible in our approach to intellectual freedom challenges.”

Nancy Ledeboer is the Spokane County Library District executive director and WLA president.
"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: Toan Nguyen, assistant manager at The Seattle Public Library, Beacon Hill Branch, and Wei Cai, (r) regional manager of five southeast branches of The Seattle Public Library, both grew up in countries with no intellectual freedom.
From the Editor by Joyce Hansen

It was one of those days you sometimes get lathish in the autumn when the sun beams, the birds toot, and there is a bracing tang in the air that sends the blood beetling briskly through the veins.

-P.G. Wodehouse, Very Good, Jeeves

Greetings, WLA,

“Autumn is beetling to an end and while it grows colder, curl up with our winter issue starring intellectual freedom (IF). IF, an essential value in keeping the library stew vital, is guaranteed by the First Amendment. For the ins and outs of IF and how to talk about it with patrons, Darlene Pearsall interviews an IF training guru (p6). Sherri Boggs moves beyond the theoretical in her tale of initial reluctance, and then joy, at taking part in a Spokane IF event (p15). Diane Cowles introduces Seattle Public Library staff who grew up in life-threatening circumstances and no IF in their respective Vietnam and China (see cover photo) (p5). In an informative throwback to a pre-digital government age, Cass Hartnett and Taryn Marks deliver intriguing back stories (p16). It’s not just Kermit the Frog who cheers green—Amanda Clarke writes about ease and options when greening the library (p22). Cameron Johnson digs deep to determine, What’s loitering in the work fridge (p25).

In Alki Editorial Committee news, we say good-bye and thank you to Theresa Kappus and student intern Brent Mills. And, in turn, welcome to Kelly Evans and Becky Ramsey who will take their spots. Evans is a business librarian at Eastern Washington University Libraries and is also active on WLA’s membership committee. Ramsey, student intern, is co-editor-in-chief of the University of Washington Information School’s student journal, and has recently started her second year of MLIS online study at the UW iSchool. Both positions are two-year appointments, from 2014 through 2016.

When the economy tanked in 2008, I had just graduated with my MLIS from the UW Information School. With no permanent job on my horizon, I filled in as a substitute and temporary librarian at a lot of public libraries. A lot. (At one point I was dizzyingly subbing for EPLS, KCLS, EPLS and Sno-Isle library systems, all at the same time.) As of August, I have been hired to work as a permanent, FT reference librarian at the Everett Public Library. My colleague, Elizabeth Koenig, was hired a month later to also work at EPLS as a FT, permanent reference librarian—this after also putting in years as a sub and temporary librarian. Which brings me to the next Alki. Publishing in March 2015, the focus will be on “Taking Care of Business” (the economic impact of libraries to their communities; business services, job and business centers; making library dollars grow). What does it take to take care of business? Hiring two FT librarians could indicate that despite a severe dependency on Google by patrons, librarians are needed, desirable and should be a priority in a library’s budget. The deadline for contributions to the issue is January 15, 2015.

I look forward to your take on the bottom line. Happy Thanksgiving to all.
To Intellectual Freedom, With Love

by Diane Cowles

The power of the state, the muscle of the police, the brutality of war—all that which are part and parcel of a refugee or immigrant’s former life, bring new meaning to any consideration of intellectual freedom. Those who fled repressive regimes are especially mindful of the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment and have much to teach us of how precious a gift it is.

Toan Nguyen, assistant manager at The Seattle Public Library, Beacon Hill branch, spent his entire childhood in Vietnam, during the war, within a school system’s set curriculum focused on the ideology of Marx, Lenin and Ho Chi Minh. The iron grip of the state controlled all media and publishing and any deviation was to be considered a “hostile act.” He remembers vividly the large photo of “Uncle Ho” with ten commandments to live by in every classroom, which were to be memorized so as to recite on demand. Communist propaganda was everywhere, and the senses were inundated by the constant barrage. It was a dangerous time for a family steeped in other values.

Nguyen’s mother, a school teacher before the war, taught her children in secret. His father was part of the South Vietnamese Army, opposed to the Communists, and dedicated to democracy. He paid dearly for those beliefs with six years of harsh imprisonment. The family was a tight-lipped unit in those days, unable to trust anyone. A simple loud knock at the door brought palpable fear to his mother, which continues today. Outside Nguyen wore a public face of compliance while being steeped in democratic values at home. Because of his dad’s service, the US government provided the avenue for the family to escape Vietnam.

When Nguyen entered high school in Seattle, the one class that put it all together was American government. Learning of checks and balances in the three branches of government, he was almost giddy for it was such a contrast. In Vietnam, there was all the power in the state versus no power with the people. When he started at The Seattle Public Library as a shelver, he looked at the entire spectrum of books and marveled at accessibility. In America, the freedoms afforded a person to not be controlled in any way is best illustrated in the public library. It is a truth he believes with his whole heart and says, “The idea of having a free library is something you should never take for granted.”

Wei Cai, regional manager of five southeast branches of The Seattle Public Library, toiled within the Cultural Revolution of the People’s Republic of China where she experienced “no choice, no privacy, no intellectual freedoms—none of that.”

In America, the freedoms afforded a person to not be controlled in any way is best illustrated in the public library.”

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An Interview with an Intellectual Freedom Training Whiz: King County Library System’s Catherine Lord

By Darlene Pearsall

Catherine Lord is the founding member of the Washington Library Trainers (WALT) Interest Group. She is the librarian services manager for the Federal Way/Vashon Cluster at King County Library System. Lord started teaching in 1999. Between then and now, in addition to publishing a book and an article on intellectual freedom (IF) in Alki, she has done trainings and train-the-training workshops at: King County Library System; Kitsap Regional Library; Puyallup Public Library; Pierce County Library System; Brooklyn Public Library; and ALA, PLA, WLA, and a Law for Libraries conference. Lord’s book, Defending Access with Confidence: A Practical Workshop on Intellectual Freedom, is available on the ALA website. This interview took place September 11, 2014.

Alki: What made you start teaching intellectual freedom?

CL: In 1999, I had just started a new job as staff development coordinator for King County Library System, and I surveyed the managers to find out what training they thought was needed for staff. This was one area of need, and when I went to look for library training that was available on the topic, I was surprised to see that there was hardly anything out there—even though it is relevant to every public library in the nation. I was also personally motivated because I love the subject—it’s an incredibly simple concept that everyone understands intrinsically, and at the same time, it becomes really complicated and nuanced as it plays out in public libraries. I also saw this as a karmic way to achieve self-forgiveness for all the times I felt that I botched the job of responding to intellectual freedom challenges in the past. As I developed the training, I tried to incorporate all of the practical things that I wished I had known when I was working directly with the public.

Alki: What sort of things?

CL: For instance, the role of the library as a public forum is really important for library staff to understand. And staff need to understand at least the gist of the many policies their library will have that are tied to intellectual freedom. I also wanted to make sure that the training gave staff the tools to respond to intellectual freedom challenges without becoming defensive or didactic—in a customer-friendly way, in a way that patrons might actually understand and appreciate where the library is coming from. Also, I think it’s really important for all of us who work in libraries to understand where intellectual freedom comes from. I sometimes remind library staff in training that librarians didn’t make up this subject to add controversy to our workplace—that this comes from the First Amendment and from the precedent of case law.

Alki: Who do you think needs to attend intellectual freedom training?

CL: That’s something that library administrators at each library need to decide for themselves. I have trained in some library systems where every single library employee is expected to attend. Some libraries have had just the staff who work in direct public service. Two library systems had me do a training for their board, which makes sense because, ultimately, all of this requires board support. It costs money to send staff to training, though, so ideally, I think libraries should determine who really needs to have a grasp on which aspects of intellectual freedom, whether that is policy, philosophy, or how to respond to challenges, and to go from there.

Alki: How has intellectual freedom training changed over the past ten or fifteen years?

CL: Whenever I do a training, I try to look at it with fresh eyes and consider what needs to be updated. Sometimes I tweak training by incorporating new ways to teach particular concepts. Obviously, when new laws emerge or local policies change, that needs to be incorporated into training. CIPA and the US PATRIOT Act were big, for instance. Technology has allowed training delivery to change, of course. For instance, at King County Library System, we have put part of the training online—that is, the content that doesn’t require interaction and skills practice. But the fundamental philosophy of intellectual freedom in libraries and its legal and Constitutional underpinnings—that has not really changed at all. So in that sense, I’d say that the training has changed very little.

Alki: What is the most challenging aspect of teaching intellectual freedom?

Darlene Pearsall is a computer education developer trainer for the King County and a member of the Washington Library Trainers (WALT) Interest Group.

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CL: Some library employees struggle with policies that collide with their personal values, and that’s difficult because they need to uphold policies without feeling that their integrity is at stake. It’s easy to support intellectual freedom when we don’t have a problem with what someone is reading or viewing, but it can be a struggle to get to the place where we support and defend the stuff that we personally don’t like. Most staff who come into the training, frankly, are already there or they get this concept right away. For others, it can be a challenge—for them, and for me as a trainer. My goal is for people to understand that they can support access to content they disagree with without compromising their values. It’s a difficult concept for some to understand—that the library defends access, not content.

Alki: What is the greatest joy of intellectual freedom training?

CL: Often during trainings, I see staff develop a greater sense of pride for their role in libraries, and a really deep sense of patriotism. It isn’t often that we get to step back from our routines and job duties to think about and talk about the big picture, which is that public libraries are at the heart of a free society. I mean, aside from the Internet, libraries are the main place people turn to for the free exchange of ideas and information. It’s exciting to see how committed staff really are to intellectual freedom. In a way, library staff are freedom fighters.

Alki: What advice do you have for library administrators who are planning to add intellectual freedom to their staff training programs?

CL: Most importantly, make sure your policies are really clear and in place and be willing to change them when greater clarity is needed, or when you spot inconsistencies with other policies or with the intellectual freedom statements to which your library is committed. So many policies can be relevant—the collections policies, of course, but also, the meeting room policies, internet policies, display policies, patron conduct policies, and others. It is really helpful when library administrators and managers attend the training along with the staff. This not only demonstrates the library’s commitment to staff training on the topic, but also allows administration to know what staff are being taught, and for administration to be present when questions emerge in training. For staff who are being trained in how to respond to intellectual freedom challenges, be sure to allow them enough training time to practice. Staff who practice what they hear are far more likely to retain more of what they learn. Finally, make it clear to staff that you will be there to support them when the going gets tough. For most staff, it’s uncomfortable when patrons get angry. The down side of unfettered access is that it will upset some patrons. Delivering the message that you will not be able to support staff who censor, but that you will support anyone who defends free access—this will go a long way in ensuring staff support.

choice, no privacy, no intellectual freedoms—none of that.” There was a magnifying glass everywhere, checking to see if one was adhering to the long arm of the government. She was sent to the “farm” at age nineteen where she spent three years of hard labor, until 1977, when the Cultural Revolution came to an end.

The first ever college entrance test was to be administered at that time and to prepare, she and four friends studied smuggled-in textbooks by lamplight, after already long days of peasant labor. Their dedication paid off: all four passed and entered the university, a university where only one percent of applicants were accepted. It was during her college years that the first sense of western values seeped into her consciousness, bolstered by reports from a professor. The professor went to the US and returned to China, and, among other things, observed life-style choices of the homeless to be self-imposed. Cai’s chance to complete her PhD in history at the University of Idaho was allowed during an opening of US-China relations. Then, in 1989, came the tumultuous cataclysm that echoed throughout the world—Tiananmen Square. Cai and her husband joined in the protest on American campuses, naively writing down their real names, prompting the Chinese government to check up on them. Now on a list, they couldn’t go back. The US government allowed Chinese Nationals who came before April 11, 1989, to stay in the US. Accordingly, Cai decided to get a second masters in Library Science just to ensure employment. Libraries played a key role in Cai’s educational experience in the US, when a librarian—originally from Taiwan—took endless time to shepherd her through research. The concept of open access to materials, the readily answered no-matter-what questions by librarians, all the privacy therein—these were lights that went on and stayed on. Now as a leader in a major metropolitan library system, Cai’s take on intellectual freedom is born of visceral experience, “The longer I stay in this profession, the more I appreciate it.”

Today in Vietnam and China, freedoms are still severely limited. Facebook was only recently allowed in Vietnam, and the internet is strictly controlled in China. Chinese libraries are starting to offer programming, but not ubiquitously. Materials and publishing are still censored with only some books from the west, and those are limited to reference collections in large universities. It may be that only through the eyes of those who understand the dearth of freedom, can the value of libraries and its adherence to the First Amendment be fully appreciated. We would do well to listen.
Freethinking Discourse While Hiding behind the Librarian’s Skirt

by Tony Wilson

Libraries are, or should be, dangerous places—you can find out anything. Libraries have a liberal bias: Knowing and thinking are better than authority for orienting your life, and there’s more than one viewpoint on anything. We believe that people who think and know and make up their own minds also make the world better. Despite some very heroic fights with some wins and some losses, it would be well to ask how we pull it off as well as we do. Partly, I think it is our image and partly it may be the values enshrined in the constitution, especially the First Amendment. Additionally, I'd like to suggest that the Second Amendment is the other side of the coin. Both amendments are great equalizers, and to my mind, they complete each other.

First and Second Amendment issues can be debated rationally, but easily become topics of belief and move outside rational debate. The sputtering of believers can be viewed directly in user ratings on Amazon as well as increasingly in our library catalogs. Published reviews are normally somewhat reasoned, focused and articulate. User comments transcend those limits and are much more concise than careful reviews. It might be worthwhile to look at a few specific examples relevant to our intellectual freedom postures in the context of Amazon Customer Reviews.

Catcher in the Rye. J. D. Salinger
We’ve been rallying around this book since, apparently, 1945. Are we getting a little embarrassed over tooting our horn on such an old victory? We’ve given it enough publicity that even those who haven’t read it think they know all about it. Amazon customers gave it 2,164 five-star ratings versus only 407 one-star ratings.

Most who don’t like it don’t like it because they don’t like Holden Caulfield (he’s as phony as those he complains about), a view that tells us a little about the readers and is not really relevant to literary merit. As to the effects of the book, one reviewer, Mark Hanson, cites Aldous Huxley saying, “Rolling in the mud is not the best way of getting clean.”

Cigarettes Are Sublime. Richard Klein
Personally, I quit smoking decades ago while looking forward to imminent cancer surgery. Nevertheless I found Klein’s work to be a graceful, literate and delightful book. It has not gotten

Tony Wilson is retired from Highline Community College where he trained prospective library employees for forty years. He was WLA president 1981–1983. Currently he is president of the Des Moines/Woodmont Library Advisory Board (KCLS) and an emeritus member of WLA. He is currently spending his declining years doing amateur archaeology on the feral librarian movement.

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a lot of attention from Amazon customer reviewers, but does have three five-star ratings and one one-star rating.

A positive reviewer, Sophia Bezirganian, responds to the content:

*In this iconoclastic gem of a book, Klein manages to provide a wonderful tool to those of us readers who resonate with his wonderful voicing of one giant “in your face” to the new and stultifying “Nanny State.”*

Another, J. Strachan, on the other hand, bounces the book off personal belief rather than responding to its content:

*However, it becomes a problem when you infringe on other people’s right to live, when your second hand smoke gets into their lungs. That means you deny others the right to life and that, my friends, is slow murder.*

**Heather Has Two Mommies. Lesléa Newman**

We seem to have more than won on this book and have come down on what currently appears to be the right side of history. The Amazon blurb reads:

*Thanks to the overwhelming support of booksellers, librarians, parents, and children, however, Heather Has Two Mommies has sold over 35,000 copies, launched a minor industry in providing books for the children of gay and lesbian parents and, as attested to by a recent New Yorker cartoon, become part of the cultural lexicon.*

Recent Amazon customers have given the tenth anniversary edition fifteen five-star ratings and nine one-star ratings.

Current objections to the book hold that it is dated and stereotyped and complain about the black and white illustrations. And there is still this reviewer:

*This book is but another of Satan’s attacks on the family as ordained by God.* By a Christian family on November 8, 2012

Heather Has Two Mommies was originally self-published because the author was unable to find relevant material elsewhere.

**My Parents Open Carry.** Brian Jeffs and Nathan Nephew

*Like Heather Has Two Mommies, My Parents Open Carry was written to fill a felt need, and, like Heather Has Two Mommies, uses black and white illustrations. The publisher, White Feather Press, admits to vanity press roots but is now a real publisher, never charging authors and issuing its share of rejections. The*
“Knowing and thinking are better than authority for orienting your life, and there’s more than one viewpoint on anything.”

Amazon site shows 356 five-star ratings and 365 one-star ratings. (To be fair, I’ll point out that Amazon’s scoring system fails to detect irony. Some top ratings seem to think the book is great, as a joke.)

Positive reviews include:
A very practical book to explain to children/young adults the rights granted to them not only as an American, but a human. It is a human reaction to defend oneself from an aggressor. It explains the philosophy behind ‘open carry’ and ‘concealed carry’ in a manner that a young American can understand. By Johnny on September 7, 2014

Despite a rather straightforward and clear presentation of the argument, no critics seem able to discuss the book in terms of its content. Instead they attack the artist, saying that the father looks like a girl with a mustache, and the daughter looks older than the mother; the font (“This book is typeset in COMIC SANS. For the love of all that is good and pure, Mr. Jeffs, if you don’t want your ideas about open carry to sound crazy, how about you write about them in a legible font that didn’t go out with Windows 95?”); and the author’s appearance (“Brian Jeffs is a walking stereotype. Goateed, fat, and undoubtedly possessed of the endowment of a gecko.”).

Some critics say the book doesn’t cover enough and assume the author has an entire evil agenda:
The book does not reference the Bible even once. I would like to know what kind of handgun Jesus would carry if he hadn’t been crucified by democrats. By Jordan on August 20, 2014

Several commenters enjoy envisioning a whole series of books that are imagined to fit the author’s agenda:
My parents are afraid of brown people
My parents love fried butter

My parents think the moon landing was faked
My parents were NOT born in Kenya
My parents are self-hating closet LGBTs
My parents support weapons to Israel so the rapture will happen sooner.
My parents wear white sheets
By So long and thanks for all the fish! on September 1, 2014

As librarians, we support users’ rights to learn anything, to explore all sides of an issue, and to feel through literature what results from a range of experience far beyond our own. As custodians, developers, and perpetrators of culture, we will never be without enemies. Libraries are being destroyed in the Middle East. A combatant in Bosnia once apologized for shelling the hotel where journalists were staying, saying they had been trying to bomb the opposition’s library. The rapid descent into irrationality by book readers opposed to a book should serve to limit our complacency about the preservation of the values we are here to serve. Enhancing a rational look at the Second Amendment along with the First may be in order.

Notes
1. The general public, I believe, and I are all fond of the shush-and-glue spinster with her sensible shoes. While she can be frightening, she is generally seen as harmless, not as someone aiding and abetting great social change. Her colleague, the pretty young children’s librarian surrounded by attentive and eager children, is a similarly comforting part of our image. Those two and the lovely building—how could anyone be averse?
2. Significantly the periodical Women and Guns was a party to the Braeburn v. North Central Regional Library litigation.
3. Disclaimer: The author is a member of the Board of the Armed Defense Training Association, a group that provides practice in the safe use of firearms and which met in the local public library until it outgrew the space. http://armeddefense.org
One of librarianship’s enduring values is intellectual freedom (Gorman, 2000, 173). This, according to former American Library Association President Michael Gorman, is the reason he devoted an entire chapter to it in his book, *Our Enduring Values: Librarianship in the 21st Century*. Included as one of the eight central values for the profession because “the phrase ‘intellectual freedom’ is widely used to describe the state of affairs in which each human being has the freedom to think, say, write, and promulgate any idea or belief.” He tempered his definition with the constraints that law and culture determine what is tolerable at any given time in any given place (Gorman, 2000, 88). This freedom of expression is protected by the United States Constitution’s First Amendment.

Gorman notes that although the American Library Association (ALA) has taken positions and issued statements concerning intellectual freedom, it has never defined this term explicitly. Its statements begin with the opposition to censorship of books and other library materials, and expand to include the library user’s right to gain access to all library materials, which in turn is connected to the librarian’s responsibility to make all library materials available to everyone (Gorman, 2000, 89). ALA statements include, but are not limited to the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association*, and *Libraries: an American Value*, which specifically states, “We celebrate and preserve our culture determine what is tolerable at any given time in any given place (Gorman, 2000, 88). This freedom of expression is protected by the United States Constitution’s First Amendment.

The library’s quest for IF extends to the essential freedoms of thought, enquiry and expression. IF is one of the most closely held core values of the library profession, advancing the cause for academic freedom in our universities both nationally and internationally. “The right to think what we please and to say what we think serves as the bedrock principle upon which we base all other freedoms. To the librarian, intellectual freedom takes the form of the right to receive ideas, that is, to access information” (Arko-Cobbah, 2011, 76). Even more, the academic library is the center of intellectual potential for the university and the society it serves. A strong IF perspective is essential to develop academic library collections and services that meet educational and research needs.

Gorman encourages librarians to hold fast to IF, carrying out duties without regard to our opinions or the opinions of others who want to restrict free access to knowledge: “Librarians believe in intellectual freedom because it is as natural to us, and as necessary to us, as the air that we breathe.” He counted himself fortunate to work in academic libraries: “Academic librarians work in an institution that is overwhelmingly dedicated to the idea of academic freedom” (Gorman, 2000, 90).

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) issued an interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights* specifically aimed at academic libraries, the *Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries*. This document’s stated purpose is “to outline how and where intellectual freedom principles fit into an academic library setting, thereby raising consciousness of the intellectual freedom context within which academic librarians work” (ALA, 2000, 1). Since IF provides every individual the right to seek and receive information from all points of view unrestricted, it places the academic librarian at the heart of articulating what IF means within the university setting (Arko-Cobbah, 2011, 84).

There are variations of the definition of academic freedom due to links to various political and social contexts, but there is consensus agreement on its meaning. In 1914, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued its first comprehensive statement on academic freedom which remains the core document on academic freedom to this day. This document declared that academic freedom should be understood to safeguard professors in their right to “freedom of inquiry in research, freedom of teaching within the university or college, freedom of extra-mural utterance and action” (AAUP, 1915, 292). This protection recognized professors’ distinctive social function to use their expertise to advance knowledge and to impart their findings to students and the public for the common good. Following widespread acceptance within the academy among trustees, administrators and professors, the Association of American Colleges joined with AAUP in issuing a subsequent document, the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, which affirms that higher education “for the common good depends upon the free search for truth, its free exposition,” and that “freedom in research is fundamental to the...
advancement of truth” (3).

Academic freedom is closely linked to tenure, which is a condition of employment granted by universities to individual professors or faculty members. Tenure insulates faculty members to express ideas and opinions, conduct research on controversial issues and teach disputed theories without fear of retribution from their employer. “Academic freedom and tenure go hand in hand in ensuring the university’s mission of expanding the frontiers of knowledge” (Arko-Cobbah, 2011, 78). The quality and character of institutions of higher education are shaped by the nature and accessibility of their library resources and the expertise of their librarians. The ACRL documented “how and where intellectual freedom principles fit into an academic library setting” in the Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (ALA, 2000, 1). Academic freedom is essential to librarians in their roles as teachers and researchers, and tenure is indispensable to librarians as participants in teaching, research and service to the educational community. “Librarians are trustees of knowledge with the responsibility of ensuring the intellectual freedom of the academic community through the availability of information and ideas, no matter how controversial, so that teachers may freely teach and students may freely learn” (AAUP, 2013, 1-2).

During the 1950s McCarthyism and the Cold War era, the US experienced fear of communism. College and university educators who promoted IF and critical thought were routinely threatened in some of the same ways that academic freedom is threatened in contemporary post 9/11 society. Common tactics were unfair accusations of disloyalty or subversion without proper evidence or using unfair investigative techniques, particularly to restrict dissent or political criticism and to discredit individuals. In the academic arena, academic freedom—access to information, is threatened. Threats of censorship, curtailment or compromise of privacy and confidentiality all threaten intellectual and academic freedom. The growing influence of business practices, market and corporate principles on the governance of colleges and universities, due to increasing costs of higher education and reductions in funding, have threatening effects on intellectual and academic freedom. The long-valued traditions of civil liberties may be compromised or threatened when they collide with the concerns of a government fighting terrorism.

“It today, as in the past, we are witnessing the combination of fear, aggressive rhetoric by political leaders and constant media attention...The implications of that...can be blatant or subtle; regardless they are destructive. (It) inhibits debate, hinders public institutions and eventually undermines democratic values” (Turk, 2007, 296-297).

According to Robert M. O’Neil, who created the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression, there has been an erosion of academic freedom since 9/11 affecting librarians, library patrons, scholars, authors, editors and bookstores the most, as governments respond to terrorism threats (O’Neil, 2007, 205-212). While the US has the most extensive legal protections of IF for its citizens, “the government has been quick to capitalize on public fear” as justification. “According to a PEW Research Center and the Washington Post national poll, 62% of Americans are willing to tolerate intrusions on personal privacy so that the federal government can investigate possible terrorist attacks” (Mintcheva, 2013, 71).

It is a legitimate goal to attempt to prevent acts of terrorism and to keep the public safe. However, such efforts sometimes collide with the central occupation of all academics, intellectual inquiry. Surveillance today is far more intrusive and invasive than was possible in the McCarthy era. Open debate may be truncated either overtly or subtly. Universities and colleges protect free debate, freedom of thought and freedom of expression, so they must constantly reinforce these values in both administrative actions and the encouragement of scholarship in order to avoid academic intimidation.

Intellectual inquiry, academic freedom and respect make up the role model taught to students. “Higher education helps create an informed citizenry that is vital to a democratic society. (It) increases the potential for individuals to perform as citizens” (Kerrey, 2007, 19). The work of universities is to prepare each generation to embrace the values and processes of democracy and know how to put them into practice to maintain our democracy. Faculty, administrators and librarians all have a role that contributes to the learning process of each student. Encouraging contending view points is active support for IF, the bedrock of democracy and democratic governance. As librarians provide the role model and the access to information, the next generation of citizens learns to embrace a worldview that values freedom of inquiry and the freedom to open public debate. The development of critical and analytical students is the development of good citizens able to participate in democracy. □

Notes


American Association of University Professors (AAUP). “1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic
I was speaking with an adult services librarian at our public library last week about planning for fall programs and the conversation turned, as it often does, to questions of attendance. Every librarian with programming experience has a similar story – months of preparation finding the perfect speaker or performer or activity, then strategic marketing in a variety of outlets. When the big day comes … well, nobody comes. Why do some programs succeed when others do not? The answers are varied, but the common thread is that something came up for the potential attendee, some barrier made attendance inconvenient, if not downright impossible.

Librarians are increasingly embracing outreach efforts to reach the underserved and to overcome some of those barriers, and programming outside of the library building is one facet of that outreach. Going outside of the building and meeting patrons in the community is a proactive way of connecting, and of overcoming geographic and transportation barriers. Be it a story time at a local childcare facility, an information table about eBooks at the local farmer’s market, or a business database demonstration to the local chamber of commerce, librarians are connecting with patrons and delivering services at a variety of locations. There is often a receptive (and sometimes captive) audience, who are usually very appreciative of the presence of their local librarians.

These librarians are responding to a need, one that may be unrecognized even by the audience they are courting. Locating programs at community venues facilitates ease of access. Patrons are more likely to find us when we strategically position ourselves in the community, and we are likely to find a receptive audience.

In a recent study of cardholders in the service area of a KCLS branch library, we found that almost seventeen percent of the local population did not have library cards. Mapping those potential patrons, we found that, unsurprisingly, the majority of non-patrons lived a significant distance from a library location. Geographic barriers and lack of major roads in some areas were further barriers to access for these community members. Perhaps these statistics come as no surprise, but they are tangible and present real challenges.

Our outreach librarians often have the support of their supervisors and library administration to venture outside of the building in an effort to reach these folks. If they don’t have support, they should! Because overcoming barriers to access library programs and services is just as important as overcoming access barriers to our collections. In the end, all questions of access are ultimately questions of intellectual freedom.

The American Library Association frames this topic as “equity of access,” which it defines as all people having “the information they need regardless of age, education, ethnicity, language, income, physical limitations or geographic barriers.” ALA supports equal access for all as a matter of course, but the discussion usually centers on 1) collections, or 2) the digital divide. I would argue that any service provided to the general public by the library, including classes and programs designed to educate and entertain, deserves equal standing.

What is the responsibility of the public library to provide equitable access, when a portion of its patron base lives a significant distance from the nearest building, with no easy public transportation options? Web-based services and downloadable content can bridge that gap somewhat, if the household has the proper equipment and access. But a portion of our services are still largely defined by our buildings, such as regular story times, reference and other specialized collections, hands-on technology instruc-


In addition, teen gaming programs, etc.

If the library devotes funding and staff time to the development and implementation of programs and services in the library building, we have an obligation to identify barriers that prevent patrons from attending and to work to overcome them. Otherwise, our services are for the benefit of those who can easily reach our libraries, and who face no additional barriers, such as “non-standard” work schedules, childcare issues, lack of awareness, etc.

Sometimes in-library programming can be modified or bolstered in creative ways, to maximize attendance by the target audience. For example, one local library has modified their story time schedule to include an afternoon session and a Saturday morning session, in addition to regular weekday story times; the additions attract parents looking for options outside of the standard schedule.

Another approach is still in the works at one KCLS location: local English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes have falling attendance numbers, and conversations with local immigrant groups and community leaders point to the barrier of childcare for parents wishing to enroll in these classes. Simply put, they cannot come because they cannot leave their kids unattended at home (or at the library), and they cannot afford to hire a caregiver. Our local library is working with the city parks and recreation department to set up a free city-sponsored activity for children, concurrent with the library’s ESOL classes, and in a location adjacent to the library. This innovative approach will hopefully allow more patrons to attend our classes.

Equally heartening was a recent summer concert for kids living in a low-income neighborhood in South King County. Kids in this neighborhood have little opportunity to visit the library, due to distance, geography, and lack of direct public transportation. So the library brought a terrific program to their local park! We were astonished when more than 200 people showed up.

So the next time you have a poorly attended program in your library, and you are considering what factors may have contributed to the sparse crowd, consider how those factors could be mitigated in future planning. Not just through adjustments in scheduling or promotions, but also through partnerships with community agencies, alternative programming spaces, and innovative cross-programming. Because giving everyone the best possible opportunity to attend your program isn’t just good stewardship, it’s your responsibility!
We’re With the Banned: A Journalist, a Comic Book Shop Owner, Two Librarians and a Handful of Bands Make a Stink about Intellectual Freedom

by Sheri Boggs

“So, I have this comic thing coming out...”

The email from my friend Leah was typically understated. But I knew better. Leah Sottile is not only a rigorously professional journalist, she’s launched a local music festival, has produced several heavy metal radio shows, and contributes regularly to The Atlantic and Al Jazeera America. And, as I was about to read, her comic about the jailing of Pussy Riot, the Russian feminist punk rock protest group, had been selected for the 2013 Comic Book Legal Defense Fund Liberty Annual.

This is so great, I thought. Good on you, Leah!

I kept reading... something about doing an event at Merlyn’s (our local comic book/gaming shop)... something about maybe getting someone to talk about banned books and intellectual freedom... maybe a librarian... And there it was: “Would that be something you’re up for?”

I hesitated. The issue does come up in my daily work—as the youth collection development librarian for the Spokane County Library District, I often see the “Request for Review of Materials” forms when they come in and assist in providing book reviews and other background information that support the inclusion of specific items in our catalog. And I’ve done more Banned Book Week displays than I can count. But I was uneasy with setting myself up as any kind of “expert” on intellectual freedom and First Amendment rights.

I talked to Leah, and was won over with her vision for how the event would go. It would be an informal panel, with plenty of time for Q&A. I enlisted my librarian friend and huge graphic novel enthusiast Brian Vander Veen, Leah talked to a couple of bands about playing, and Merlyn’s owner John Waite offered to emcee and moderate the discussion. Between the four of us and some live music, I felt confident we could put together a reasonably entertaining presentation.

The event, timed to coincide with the release of Leah’s comic, took place last November. In planning the discussion we realized we needed to gear it to a diverse audience which could include (but not be limited to): comic book nerds, random gamers, teachers, punks, hipsters, parents, and maybe even a smattering of library folk. And that is exactly the mix that showed up. We had about 40 people, not bad for one of the first genuinely cold Friday nights of the season.

Leah led us off with how she became interested in the work of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF). With Pussy Riot still in the news, it was the perfect jumping off point. Leah spoke eloquently about her love of all things punk, and how the imprisonment of Pussy Riot inspired her to write a comic about the band and the need for free and protected artistic expression. She also highlighted the great work that the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund does in terms of publicizing book challenges, offering legal support to libraries, bookstores, authors and illustrators, and putting out a yearly anthology to highlight the cause and raise money for the legal fund.

Next up, I talked about book challenges and how they work. Knowing the crowd would be mostly non-librarians, I explained the difference between a book challenge and a book banning, where the ALA and the Spokane County Library District stand on the freedom to read, and the process we use to handle possible challenges in my district. We talked about how some of the most popular series for kids (Harry Potter, Captain Underpants) are frequently challenged, and how Spokane has the distinction of having at least three authors with Spokane ties show up regularly on the annual ALA Banned Books list—Chris Crutcher, Terry Trueman, and Sherman Alexie. And then Brian discussed some of the more notorious book challenges across the nation and why graphic novels and comic books are especially singled out (it’s the immediacy of the images) before moving on to a discussion of the benefits of graphic novels and comic books in encouraging literacy.

We kept frequently challenged book covers and the rationales for the books’ challenges running on a big screen behind us.

All in all it was a great success, and one of the most enjoyable library events in which I’ve taken part. We closed with a segment on “What you can do,” and Merlyn’s owner John Waite was especially adamant about the importance of checking out or buying challenged comics or requesting titles your library or bookstore doesn’t have. We shared resources for parents and teachers, such as the excellent CBLDF publication Raising a Reader. And then the first band started to play, and we basked in the glow of a room full of people chatting about comics, books, and the awesomeness of free artistic expression.

Notes

The Things We Lose: Government Documents in the Digital Age*
by Cass Hartnett and Taryn Marks

For several years, as I moved back and forth across the country, I have carried with me a large box of old pictures. I rarely look at the contents, but every time I move, the box is one of the first items loaded into the moving truck. I’ve thought about digitizing or displaying the photos but have never quite mustered the organizational effort and finances; I doubt I ever will. By now, some of the pictures are so old that I don’t remember the faces in them, the locations in which they were taken, the memories they were supposed to spark. And even though getting rid of the box would significantly de-clutter my life, I have yet to do so.

Recently, as part of a building renovation, a Seattle area federal depository library (FDL) legally downsized its collection and offered tens of thousands of withdrawn government documents to the University of Washington’s (UW) Government Publications department. Although both libraries are FDLs, each had varied collections policies and markedly different collections. There was thus a possibility that there would be a significant number of documents UW did not own, so librarians at UW selected for evaluation a modest subsection of what was being offered. This still formidable chunk of federal materials was transported to Suzzallo Library on UW’s Seattle campus, and most of them still remain in their moving boxes with French fry logos on the outside.

Wandering through the Government Publications area of Suzzallo, one sees the French fry boxes stored in a variety of spaces, a few bookshelves marked “not for check out” that have piles of unprocessed materials and books stacked into place, and finally a technical processing room almost completely filled with boxes of government documents, neatly stacked but only loosely sorted. In the past few years, many of the documents have been unpacked, catalogued, inscribed with the appropriate SuDoc number, and most of the boxes have had a cursory review, the outsides labeled with the documents’ issuing agency. Many boxes remain untouched: like my photos, it is difficult to justify expending the resources to sort and digitize every last item within them and it is heartrending to consider sending them to a recycling center.

The problem, the underpinning of the arduous decision to keep or to throw, is that each document tells its own story and it is unclear whether that story has been recorded anywhere else. Federal government documents are still not completely represented in library online catalogs or OCLC, especially those published before 1976, making it hard to know how many libraries have a particular resource. Additionally, the cost of researching and preserving these documents’ histories, even if those histories are currently unknown may not be justified by the documents’ historical worth or the desire for online access. For a librarian in the making, the donation offered the unique opportunity to explore this question. So I culled and searched and found five documents, specific to Washington State, which should be worth the cost of finding them. All have now been added to the UW Libraries collection and are searchable through the catalog. These are their stories.

The Port of Seattle, Washington (1938)
Port Series Reports are technical documents published by the Army Corps of Engineers. Until 1992, the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors assisted in issuing these technical documents, which are now under the auspices of the Institute for Water Resources’ Navigation and Civil Works Decision Support Center. The reports are published for each of the main ports in the United States, typically every ten years or so. Each report contains technical data about the facilities available at the port, including aerial photos, maps, and descriptions of the port itself. The data available in the reports is used to determine whether and what type of maintenance each port needs, including dredging by the Army Corp of Engineers; and to predict future commercial shipments within the ports.

Although a record of the Port of Seattle, Washington from 1938 exists in several databases, including WorldCat and the Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications, no digitized version of it exists. Less than sixty libraries, primarily located in Seattle or the Seattle area, have a copy of this document. The document itself includes several large, fold-out maps that would take extra care to convert into a high-quality, digital format. In addition, this version of the Port of Seattle was written just a few years before the start of World War II, giving it historic value: comparisons of versions written in later years would reveal the amount of changes to the Port of Seattle following the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the commercial and economic changes brought by World War II.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
At the same time, the Port of Seattle is part of a series of documents that are frequently published; maps of the Seattle ports of 1938 are available in other sources; and although the physical characteristics of the land that encompasses the port has changed, these changes have been duly noted in many environmental studies that go far beyond these Army Corp of Engineers maps from 1938. In my box of memorabilia, this Port of Seattle document is like a postcard art print from a museum show: surely there are higher-quality images available, but there is something inherently special about a copy that’s my own.

The Northwestair Newsletters (January 1960–February 1964) Each month between early 1958 and early 1964, the 25th Air Division distributed the Northwestair around McChord Air Force Base. The newsletter detailed events and news from around the base, with gossip column-like stories about various personnel and pictures from the social events taking place around the base. It also included news about the Air Force as a whole and about other Air Force bases around the country, especially bases in the northwest. Although the 25th Air Division was inactivated in 1990, the 62nd Airlift Wing, the current primary Air Force division at what is now Joint Base Lewis-McChord, still publishes its own online newsletter at http://www.62aw.af.mil. Almost no record of this newsletter exists. WorldCat has a record of the newsletter because of cataloging provided by the UW Libraries; no other library shows OCLC holdings. The Monthly Catalog has no record; even a Google search did not reveal a digital record, much less a digital copy. The National Archives and Records Administration indicates that it has general orders for the 25th Air Division from 1954-1955, which is unlikely to include newsletters; other than that, no easily-located record of the Northwestair exists. The newsletter provides a unique and comprehensive look at life on an Air Force base in the early 1960s and is especially noteworthy because the 25th Division no longer exists. Without the boxes at Suzzallo, there would be almost no record that the newsletter existed; the events that occurred, as events on an Air Force base, are likely not recorded in any other location except for in personal records. Of the five documents I discuss here, this is the only one for which I cannot make an honest argument that it should not be saved. In my box of photos, it is the only remaining copy of a photo of my late grandmother and I when I was an infant.

See the New Look of the Atom at the Hanford Science Center (1968) A brochure publicizing the Hanford Science Center, the cover of this blue and white document features a startling picture of a child looking through an 18-inch yellow piece of lead glass designed to protect employees from radioactive materials. Richland and Hanford, Washington, were the location of a nuclear power plant that created the plutonium used in the nuclear bombs exploded over Japan in 1945; data indicates that the Hanford nuclear site has two-thirds of the high-level radioactive waste in the United States. The Hanford Science Center was established after World War II to promote the benefits of nuclear technology, a fact clearly demonstrated by the tone of the brochure. Although the Science Center no longer exists, the entirety of its collection was transferred to the newly established Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science, and Technology in 1995. Itself set to close itself in 2014, the CREHST is in the process of determining which records belong to the Department of Energy and which belong to the Hanford Science Center, and of transferring the Hanford Science Center records to the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center, a museum being built at the former entrance to the nuclear power plant.
Although there is much documentation about the Hanford site, the cleanup, and Hanford’s involvement in the atomic history of the United States (the UW Libraries serves as a Hanford Public Information Repository), not much information exists online about the Hanford Science Center itself. In part because the documents were transferred between locations several times and in part because many of the documents that were held in the Hanford Science Center have not been catalogued, little is available online about the historical exhibits that were housed at the Science Center. The brochure itself is an interesting study of propaganda issued to convince people of the “exciting new science” of nuclear energy, especially because the brochure was printed around the same time that the dangers of nuclear waste were first being realized and publicized.

The brochure would be easy to digitize—it is short, and although its formatting would be lost in digitization, the images could be arranged to convey a complete and accurate picture of the brochure’s contents. Even the odd blue color of the brochure could be preserved, and the color would not prevent readable digitization. The brochure is similar to the BPA Shirt Pocket Facts (see below); it is a document that could be of historical interest to those studying the time period or the history of nuclear power plants in the United States. But the question is whether saving the neat-looking pamphlet from a museum in Barcelona that’s at the bottom of my box of pictures is worth the effort of sorting through the other, possibly irrelevant pictures above it.

Undersea Warfare Fleet Support (1976)

Just west of Bainbridge Island, jutting into Puget Sound, is the Keyport Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC). A naval torpedo station established in 1914, the NUWC (originally named the Undersea Warfare Fleet Support) is a research, development, engineering, and fleet support center for submarines, autonomous water systems, and weapons used in underwater battles. One of two such facilities in the United States, the Keyport location is known as “Torpedo Town” because it is the major repair center for torpedoes, both nationally and internationally.

The document itself was clearly written for the public, with numerous pictures of engineers at work along with an overview and description of the work that was being done at the Warfare Center. It is strikingly similar to the brochure from the Hanford Science Center, with its propagandistic tone and oddly blue color. Like the Science Center brochure, the contents of the document could easily be digitized, although there may be some quality issues with the photographs and the formatting of the document could be lost. WorldCat does have a record of the document, and indicates that approximately 50 libraries in the United States have a copy of the publication from this specific year; there is not, however, a record of the document in any other government website.

Like with the Hanford Science Center and the BPA Shirt Pocket Facts, most of the information contained in the Fleet Support document has been updated and the most recent information is available online. But also like these other documents, the glimpse that the Fleet Support document provides into the history of Keyport, the Naval base there, and how the center operated in the mid-1970s is potentially unique.

There is certainly historical worth to the document though the value of that worth is unclear.

BPA Shirt Pocket Facts (June 30, 1976)

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) began on August 20, 1939, when Congress created it to harness energy from a recently-built dam on the Columbia River in Washington and Oregon. Those in the Northwest are familiar with the BPA name, as it currently supplies one-third of the power used in the northwest as well as three-fourths of the voltage transmission to an area that includes Washington, Oregon, California, and Nevada. The BPA is now a self-financed organization, but still must obtain Congressional approval for many high-level decisions. Perhaps most interestingly, one of the BPA’s claims to fame is the fact that in 1941, it commissioned Woody Guthrie to tell the story of the BPA, resulting in two dozen songs, including “Roll on Columbia.”

Although the BPA still issues these short, FAQ-type brochures (today simply called Pocket Facts), no online archive or record exists of Pocket
Facts earlier than the current year. The only library that has OCLC holdings for this particular edition is the Bonneville Power Administration’s own library;25 no record exists in the Monthly Catalog or in WorldCat (which only contains a link to the BPA’s library site). Searching for the Shirt Pocket Facts on the Internet reveals only two documents that have cited to this particular year. The brochure presents an interesting view of the BPA as it existed in 1976: it is just two years after it became a self-financed organization and a year before it became one of the four power marketing agencies run by the Department of Energy. It also presents an interesting historical perspective into the current issues of the time: the Shirt Pocket Facts of 1976 focuses on data such as amount of power generated and areas served, while the Pocket Facts of 2012 focuses on environmental impact and sustainability issues.26

Like the Port of Seattle document, the BPA Shirt Pocket Facts contains primarily technical data that likely could be culled from elsewhere. But the Shirt Pocket Facts are easily digitized: literally the size of a shirt pocket, less than twenty pages, and with no pictures, the document could be scanned using an at-home scanner without losing any of the content. Unique only because of its size, it is a document similar to a brochure one picks up at a museum in London. The information contained in the document is easily found online. But it is an interesting shape, just like the information I brought home from London about the gardens there.

Finding these locally important documents within the contents of the UW’s unsorted donation, though, requires expending a good deal effort to sort and to research. So I cannot categorically conclude that preservation and digitization must be the fate of the remaining donated documents. I’m still not ready to discard my box of photos. But if I ever do, I will do so having carefully weighed the value of those memories with the effort of organizing and displaying them. For as editor Sherry Turkle noted in a 2007 book, objects are emotional and intellectual companions that anchor memory.27 Suzzallo Library’s treasures are part of the global community, and belong to the curators and library users whose work sheds light on our collective memory box.

NOTES


Continued from page 19


20. “Keyport, Naval Undersea Warfare Center.”


23. “History, Bonneville Power Administration.”


27. Sherry Turkle, introduction to Evocative Objects: Things We Think With (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007), 4-6.
What if All of WLA Read the Same Book?

by Darcy Brixey

We all spend a large amount of time matching books to readers and readers to books. We’ve made recommendations to students and book groups, but rarely do we have the time to read and discuss books with our colleagues. The Washington Library Association would like to invite you to participate in a book discussion activity to support the 2015 WLA conference theme “Come to the Table-Libraries Are Market Fresh!”

After much voting via email, *The Winemaker’s Daughter* by Timothy Egan is the title chosen by members to read and discuss.

Once you’ve read the book, grab some library friends and co-workers and come up with your own discussion group. It can be as formal or informal as you’d like! Whether it takes place online, in a pub or in the staff room at lunch, we’d like to hear about it! Email comments or thoughtful questions from your group or photos from your gatherings to dbrixey@kcls.org. It’s not required, but it may enhance your conference attendance next year, as there will be some programming around the book. Expect a lively discussion of the chosen book during the meet and greet portion of the 2015 conference.

“Once you’ve read the book, grab some library friends and co-workers and come up with your own discussion group. It can be as formal or informal as you’d like!”

The debut novel by *New York Times* Pulitzer-winning correspondent Egan about a young woman’s quest to uncover the cause of her brother’s death was released January 1, 2004. He worked for eighteen years as a writer for *The New York Times*, first as the Pacific Northwest correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter. In 2006, Egan won the National Book Award, considered the nation’s highest literary honor, for his history of people who lived through the Dust Bowl, *The Worst Hard Time*. The book also became a *New York Times* bestseller.

In 2001, he won the Pulitzer Prize as part of a team of reporters who wrote the series *How Race Is Lived in America*. He has done special projects on the West and the decline of rural America, and he has followed the entire length of the Lewis and Clark Trail. Egan is the author of many books, including *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest*, and *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis*. He lives in Seattle and writes a weekly column, “Opinionator,” for *The New York Times*.

Timothy Egan is the author of *The Winemaker’s Daughter*, chosen by the Washington Library Association for discussion.
“Thoughtful design keeps new libraries relevant,” wrote Scott Carlson regarding the library as idea, insti-tution, and archetype.1  Nothing says education quite like the image of a library. The environmental movement in spirit and in architecture relates to libraries and their need to be relevant and espouse thoughtful design. By employing green design methods, libraries can benefit tremendously.

The Green Architectural Movement
The Green Architectural Movement is more than just following a series of guidelines outlined by the U. S. Green Building Council. The green movement, in architecture and elsewhere, is a spirit of preservation, a state of mind that once embraced is infectious. It changes the reality of conduct as much as it does the spirit of that conduct. Libraries have played the role of trendsetter in the past few decades. Despite the common view of libraries as slow-to-innovate or as byzantine archives, they have conversely proved to be early adopters of technology. Not only does going green mesh with library innovation, it likewise meshes with a library’s innate goal to conserve and preserve. In this case, not only books, but also the environment. In addition to being an early innovator and thoughtful conservator, going green can offer substantial financial benefits in a fluctuating economy.

Libraries: What it Means to Be Green
The list of the methods used by libraries embracing sustainability is extensive: once the challenge to go green has been taken, the variations seem nearly endless. The 2002 Eugene, Oregon library remains a highly celebrated example. It was a case where librarians, staff, and the greater community took an active role in the development of the new library. The local Northwest Eco Building Guild took an interest in the building and voiced concern over the planned use of synthetic carpeting, particularly in the children’s department where children were likely to be on or near the floor where toxic fumes might linger.2 Project directors took petitions seriously and sought to find the best possible products within the parameters of their budget and needs. Ultimately a low-fume, recycled-materials carpet was chosen.3

The library opened its doors in late 2002 with a praiseworthy environmental design. Equipment ran on high-efficiency motors and natural day-lighting was exploited; the new facility was nearly 100,000 square feet larger than the old facility and promised to run an annual energy bill only a few thousand dollars more than the previous building. When costs had to be cut, community members made a clear request that the green elements of the building be incorporated as planned. Yet while the community and staff seemed focused on the sustainability of the building, the greater vision of the library was not compromised. Responding to the building being thirty percent more efficient than codes required, library director Connie Bennett told local reporters, it “will be a wonderful payoff to spend our budget on things that connect the public to books and ideas rather than keeping us warm.”4  The saving of precious funds and the involvement of the community are methods of achieving our principal goal as librarians: to broadly disseminate information and knowledge. If a community is minimally enthusiastic about the sustainable elements of a new library design, this is an opportunity for librarians to function as public educators. At the 2004 American Library Association meeting, a panel was presented entitled “Going Green without Going Broke: Revisited.” The opening speaker was Ginnie Cooper, formerly employed at the award-winning Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon. She encouraged addressing sustainability in both existing and new buildings. She discussed at some length the process for achieving LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification at the Multnomah County Library, which serves some 700,000 people. She emphasized that sustainability and saving money also includes old buildings through energy conservation. This can be done as simply, she said, as energy efficient lighting, or by using natural day lighting, increasing insulation, and adding prominent recycling options. Green renovations can also increase the value of the site as well as improving health. High efficiency heating and cooling, a greater supply of bike racks, the use of low toxicity paint and carpet are all common options now available both to new and old libraries. Having worked on elements of environmental design in more than nineteen buildings, Cooper reported that products like these are easy to find.5

The Hillsdale Library in Portland was the first building to be built in Multnomah County where LEED certi-fication was an explicit goal. LEED is a term that has become commonplace in the field of architecture, though it only entered the general lexicon a few years ago. Claiming LEED status is additionally benefi-cial, fostering good publicity. The Hillsdale Library held a charrette design competition that allowed any-one, designer or not, to be involved in the conception process and share ideas. A charrette is a way of generating a design solution while

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Continued on next page
integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group of people.) Cooper discussed ways to earn LEED points: handling wastewater onsite, ample bike parking, showers (her library was a 13,000 square foot building, and the showers were used by the alternative commuters who worked there), and green roofing. These roof gardens tend to be controversial for those concerned with budget issues, especially when one considers that an Energy Star roof earns the same points and is indeed much lighter in weight and maintenance. Despite the perceived extravagance of some of these measures, there is nevertheless a monetary payback in energy savings. In Cooper’s experience, there was a significant savings anywhere from twenty to twenty-five percent on energy costs. In this Oregon case, an additional $17,000 tax was cut by the local government, not to mention that in their location there was considerable community interest. In Portland, for example, all new public buildings apply for LEED certification, expressing a kind of community spirit of awareness.6

Engineer Allen Locke expresses his desire to have sustainability understood in general terms, because, he fears, many people are simply overwhelmed with the concept, the details, and the associated jargon. The heart of sustainability is not data on CO2 emissions, but a spirit of action, a state of mind. This is a real sense of pioneering Americanism at its twenty-first century best.7 It is a battle cry or manifesto that serves to improve not only the reputation of libraries, but also the physical health of their patrons and the environment we all occupy.

Green Techniques
In its simplest form, building sustainably can be the action of continuing to use an older, well-built structure. Often 100-year-old buildings are more sustainable than those of the 1960s. It stands to reason that a better built building will last longer, and is, therefore, a type of sustainable architecture. These older structures usually have operable windows for climate control and thick masonry walls that allow thermal heat gain in winter and slow heat penetration in the summer. Remodeling a building may actually reduce waste compared to the option of razing and rebuilding from the ground up – imagine tossing an entire library into a landfill. For some older buildings that frequently suffer from being overly dark, the addition of clerestory windows (high windows above eye level) may be enough to resolve the problem. In the case of the Philadelphia 1906 Carnegie Library, solving the basement flooding problem was as simple as filling it in with concrete and adding a new mezzanine level to the building. This was a creative green strategy. Moreover, studying the techniques employed in the construction of historical libraries can offer valuable insight into present-day decision making. Pre-modern designers often employed common-sense techniques, since, for example, issues surrounding heating and cooling predate the technology of air conditioning.8

Having environmentally friendly features in your library need not be excessively difficult nor complicated. Efforts can be as simple as energy efficient light bulbs, recycled printer paper, recycle stations, or simply encouraging employees and patrons to carpool. Other good efforts include having parking lots made of porous materials, which allow for rainwater to be absorbed rather than run into sewers, drainage ponds to catch run-off water, solar cells on the roof to generate power, window awnings or louvers to reduce glare and heat, using renewable flooring materials (such as bamboo or cork) and low-flow faucets and toilets.9

Take for example the 1911 New York Public Library, which can be appreciated from a sustainable viewpoint today. This library made use of light courts for cross-ventilation and light. The design also allows nearly every patron and staff member access to a window – which is seldom true of contemporary libraries. In a more recent library design in Nashville, Tennessee, a garden courtyard, temperature controlled by its fountain, has become a community center, a destination even beyond that of the library itself.10 Since community involvement and large visitor numbers remain high on the goals set by libraries, increasing numbers by these kinds of incentives are valid options.

Addressing the issue of skylights, of which many librarians are fearful due to a history of leaking, concerns may be put to rest, since in recent years skylight technology has improved significantly, offering skylights that do not leak. By exploiting day lighting instead of electronic lighting and by supplementing the remaining electric lighting via solar panels, energy expenses can be greatly reduced. Serving both person and book, low emission glass is now available that can lower heat gain and protect book spines.11

More Examples of Sustainability
South Carolina Barnwell County Library used a closed furniture store as its new library location and re-used seventy-five percent of the material already there. Former factories are also good options for libraries since they offer open space suitable for large library stacks. Buildings equal in size to these old factories could often not be built today due to the cost. These creative re-use options are optimal for libraries working with a constrained budget. European designs also offer an excellent palette of ideas, since decades of high-energy costs in Europe have made them innovators in using natural resources and in controlling heat or cold intake by using louvers to reflect light in the mornings and reduce it in the heat of the afternoon. A brise-soleil (an architectural feature) also allows the low winter sun to penetrate the spaces while blocking the high summer sun. There has also been successful experimentation with heating and
cooling walls to control the climate of library spaces.12 Though these techniques are of an architectural nature, they can be understood and employed by motivated librarians involved in building design, librarians not wanting to leave those tasks to the architects alone.

The Los Angeles Public Library Lakeview Terrace Branch makes use of thermal massing to reduce heat gain, while stretching the east-west elevation to improve climate control. Notable points regarding this library include a $250,000 grant the project received because of its green ambitions, the extensive use of sun-control louvers and light shelves, an Energy Star roof, and solar panels which provide fifteen percent of the building’s power. The construction team also made an effort to divert seventy-five percent of construction waste from the landfills and into recycling material, and likewise used recycled materials in the new building.

Conclusion

New and renovated library buildings record an increase in patron use and foot traffic, generating reasons, through their data, for more libraries to renovate. Libraries at Harvard, the University of Richmond and Peterwhite Library, for example, report a marked increase in library use after renovation.13 Libraries increasingly embrace sustainable design and receive payment for their efforts in multiple ways. Libraries have often been early adopters in the realm of technology, and in this arena they seem equally forward thinking.14 As a college icon, the campus library is under special pressure to promote its image as not only a center of learning, but also as an example of environmental awareness and concern.

At the Queens Library Corona Branch, the library employs sustainable library principles and has a wall of glass that allows for a welcoming atmosphere and ample day lighting. The patron response: “The coolest library ever.”15 In honor of this function, the library as an institution now seeks to live up to this cool factor and become the kind of environment expected to aesthetically match its philosophical spirit. Furthermore, not only does the library reflect its community spirit, but community involvement. Sustainable behaviors are just as fitting as other community outreach services.

Library design in terms of innovation and aesthetic appeal plays an increasing role in the number of visitors a library receives. At Ferris State University, patron numbers increased from 15,000 per month to 45,000 after the completion of its new library building.16 The success of new libraries has shown that size and location matter little in increasing patron numbers. What appears to draw contemporary users is, rather, ample day lighting, climate control, cozy work places, and easy access to information. Libraries that suffer most, it seems, are those that appear outdated.17 The definition of what a library is seems to be under reconsideration as much as the sustainable architectural movement has challenged what a building essentially is. Nor is it simply aesthetic and technological demands that younger patrons require of their libraries. The idea of green architecture is one that promises to be of increasing interest, even, perhaps, expected by coming generations. Regarding green design, engineer Ken Carter foresees that “the next generations are the ones that are really going to embrace it.” By going green, the library as an institution is helping ensure its longevity both in terms of sustainability and in terms of appreciation by younger patrons. As the Eugene library director said, the most important goal will be met, that of getting the books and ideas to the people. Here, too, is another arena for the library profession to assert its innovative and early adoption behaviors.

Notes

What evil lurks in the staff refrigerator…?
by Cameron Johnson

For months, I refused to notice what was growing in the staff refrigerator. I was like Bold Nelson at Copenhagen, who turned his blind eye to the retreat signal, then smashed the Danish fleet. I ignored the fridge problem and spent my time on materials selection and on building the periodicals database. There is library work to do in libraries, after all. But this January 5th, I had a harder time than usual finding a place to stash my single, foil-wrapped chicken sandwich. Forty-five people share this refrigerator and the competition for space is always brisk. I came in late, and had to root around among the baggies, wrinkle-worn paper sacks, jars, bottles and foil-wrapped bundles at which I had been squinting my eyes for all these months. That’s when the smell hit me.

It was complex. Putrid, sure, but with a sweetish tang. Bacteria and mold, but probably mildew, too, judging by the color of the walls. Bacteria don’t have the refined palate that you or I have; they take your gourmet offering and culture it into substances they can use. They multiply exponentially. Given months or years, they grow into trillions of units, some bad, some good, some no doubt deadly. They reduce all organic material to simple, malodorous substances which they use for their endless mitosis. No such thing as moderation on this level. Oxidation, reduction, hydrolysis, reproduction. What was formerly solid food, becoming liquid, then becoming gas. The smell of diverse, refrigerated rot. I did not feel like celebrating this diversity.

I got hot about it. Who are these people that leave this stuff here to fester? I enlisted a confederate. We both got hot about it. No one could remember the last time the fridge was cleaned. For a while, there had been acrimonious e-mail messages from the head of Tech Services lamenting about the growing fridge mess, but those were laughed at. The cruelty of workmates is akin to family cruelty, intimate and petty. No doubt someone secretly enjoyed the power represented by that refrigerated microculture and the squealing it provoked.

We weren’t about to clean it up. We were innocent day trippers, just putting our sandwiches and yogurt in until lunch time and then consuming them before the germs could get a foothold. Cleaning it up was out, but short of that, what? An inventory, we finally decided. And publishing the results on the Dynix e-mail. Maybe someone would recognize some of the food items described and give the perpetrators a hard time. Ridicule is powerful mojo. Remember the pictures

“Our reverence for all life forms precluded our disturbing the contents of the fridge. An embarrassed children’s librarian did remove the library book, allowed it to warm, and presumably returned it to the stacks.”

Cameron Johnson is a reference librarian and impresario for the Everett Public Library.

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of President Carter in a canoe clubbing the “attack rabbit?” For my money, that incident cost him the election in ‘80 and gave us eight years of Ronald Reagan. I got a pad and paper, and my inventory partner called out what she found in the fridge. It was stuffed, with fresher things layered on top of the live-in items. The bare light bulb cast a bleak, shadowless light.

In the door of the refrigerator we found: four salad dressings; one jar mayo; one Major Gray’s Mango Chutney; three jars of mustard, including one cranberry mustard; one bacon bits; one jar pickles; one jar Panola Pepper Sauce; two fast-food tartar sauces, dated 7/2/97; two free-floating, mangled margarine hunks, partially in foil; two containers Jell-O; one salmon cream cheese; one box baking soda with top torn off, presumably to promote freshness.

“I can’t believe the colors of some of this stuff,” my confederate said, holding up a baggie of broccoli and rice swimming now in a brown fluid. “And what causes this stink?”

I shrugged. “Cellular breakdown. Enzymes still rearrange things, even when the food is dead. And bacteria go to work, scissoring apart the food, pulling clusters of molecules off and recombining them with other pieces they’ve made. They break down proteins in food, creating really stinky chemicals like ammonia and hydrogen sulfide. My wife says that part of the smell is made by the bacteria breaking wind, but that may be a simplification.”

We moved to the main compartment. One maple syrup; one jar jelly; one jar organic salsa; one beef stroganoff in Tupperware, dated 12/24/97 (Merry Christmas); one container half-and-half, dated 11/1/97; two rock solid squares of apple cake with what appeared to be mealworms on top; something in a gelatinous medium, possibly a forensic exhibit mislaid by Everett Police; one Payless bag to be mealworms on top; something in a gelatinous medium, possibly a forensic exhibit mislaid by Everett Police; one bag of rice, and a 1996 burrito, solid and heavy enough to break a puck if you prefer); one knife named Ed, lost by a children’s librarian; one small box of McDonald’s Chocolate Chip cookies; one jar organic salsa; one beef stroganoff in Tupperware, dated 12/15/97; one stew in Tupperware, age indeterminate; ½ loaf extra-sour rye; three deviled eggs in Tupperware; one diet coke; and five fairly recent-looking lunches.

Oddly, the freezer compartment had no frost buildup, though some items had developed “leaves” of frost. Maybe the bacteria and the mildew had commandeered all the humidity for their own processes. Certainly the compartment was cold enough, as some items were hard as granite. We found: one Minute Maid OJ; one frozen pink mass—constitution indeterminable; five frozen Jenny Craig meals; one bagged, frozen apple juice; ½ gal. Dreyer’s peppermint ice cream, melted and refrozen; ½ gal. vanilla ice cream; ½ bag English muffins; ½ bag frozen spinach; one Everett Public Library book, The Three Wonderful Beggars, call no. J/398.21/Scott, last checked out June 1995; one frozen broccoli crown, now army green; ½ loaf bread; ten more frozen dinners; two bags blue ice; one bag rock-hard focaccia hunks; one bagel in a bag (or hockey puck if you prefer); one knife named Ed, lost by a children’s librarian; two dead, frozen tropical fish, preserved and awaiting autopsy by the fish vendor; and a 1996 burrito, solid and heavy enough to function as a bludgeon.

Our reverence for all life forms precluded our disturbing the contents of the fridge. An embarrassed children’s librarian did remove the library book, allowed it to warm, and presumably returned it to the stacks.

I next put out an email on the results of our inventory, and made several suggestions about how to handle it, including having the fridge designated a superfund site, requesting a Department of Wildlife Species inventory, submitting an EIS for the cleanup, and contacting the city legal department to investigate the possible legal liability for cleanup personnel, etc.

“Hard to say,” I said. “Bacteria love meat, because it’s moist and not too acidic. They break the stuff down into all kinds of intermediate substances. That’s why it’s so difficult to pin down food allergies by the way. Bacteria break food down in your gut, too. You may be allergic to one of the intermediate substances, not to the original food at all.” I glanced at the ingredients label on the package. “Count all the additives they put in, and you’d need to send that stuff to a lab to find out for sure what you had.”

“You probably wouldn’t feel too well if you ate it,” I agreed.
My irony was either lost on my colleagues or ignored by them. I got the following responses:

1. Two knit-browed lectures advocating throwing out everything—Tupperware and all—on a regular, announced schedule. Advocates for this policy believe that people are like shoe-chewing puppies and need stern, predictable sanctions against misbehavior.
2. Two people said there would be more room for their stockpile of frozen dinners if only people would clear out their revolting leftovers.
3. One person, who had railed in the past about the state of the refrigerator, was seen removing an ancient wrinkled paper bag from the fridge.
4. Another person, mistakenly believing that I was going to clean the fridge, put dibs on the cranberry mustard.
5. Someone put a biohazard warning sticker on the fridge door.

Nothing changed for a month and a half. The fridge was definitely on the agenda, because I would see people peering inside it, probably checking the accuracy of my report. I threatened to put up a stoolie box, so staff members could anonymously name people belonging to the disgusting items, then publish the names in email. I also threatened to initiate a “disgusting food item of the week” award. I admit I raved some, and they must have known my threats were toothless. The bacterial culture grew on. One of the racks began to drip brown liquid. I did not look for the source.

Finally, it was over. In a paroxysm of energy, three librarians—one from Reference, one from Children’s and one from Outreach—eradi-
cated this little ecosystem. Using scrub pads, sponges, baking soda, window cleaner, 409, dish detergent and boiling water, it took the three of them only 45 minutes. The reference librarian said it was her penance for Lent. The fridge contents filled the entire staff garbage can. The janitor reported that the can weighed 100 pounds. I put out an email bulletin saying “The fridge is clean—dirty it and die.”

Epilogue: one of the librarians involved in the cleanup told me later that people in one department had complained that their fresh new bag of English muffins had been thrown away. Our Good Samaritan fished the money out of her purse to replace the muffins. Never let anyone tell you we aren’t a service profession.

Being a reference librarian, I searched for a suitable quote. From Milton’s Paradise Lost: “Accuse not nature, she hath done her part; Do thou but thine.”

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People and Places

Makers from all over were invited to showcase their creations at the second annual Lakewood MakerFest this summer. Makers displayed their projects and visitors met the makers, were inspired by their inventions, and caught the making bug. MakerFest, a free all-ages event, included suggested categories: alternative energy, art, data collection, electronics/technology, gaming, mechanical things, photo, practical ideas, robotics, sewing, sculpture and video. The event was sponsored by Pierce County Library System, City of Lakewood, Lakewood Computer Clubhouse and Pierce College.

It’s a game, it’s an online library, it’s a rewards program! Pierce County Library launched Scout—an interactive online library experience—and in three months more than 1,700 have signed up. Scout participants earn badges, qualify for prizes, and share experiences. Players choose from categories: Books, Do-It-Yourself, Food and Local. Anyone age 18 and older may participate. Prizes require...
a library card. Prizes include gift cards to local museums, restaurants, cooking supply stores, book stores, home improvement and craft stores, along with a grand prize drawing for an iPad. Scout is funded by the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.

**Vancouver Community Library**, a branch of Fort Vancouver Regional Library District, took part in Outside the Lines, a weeklong celebration demonstrating the creativity and innovation happening in libraries. The September events included trips to the farmers market and a local laundromat to issue library cards and talk about library services, a literary trivia night at a downtown brewpub, and a wine-and-book pairing event at a nearby wine bar.

The **Lynden Library** of the Whatcom County Library System unveiled its new 3D Printer at an open house on September 17. It included a demonstration of the printer at work, along with presentations from Ivan Owen of E-Nabling the Future—a non-profit organization that creates 3D Printed Prosthetics—and Troy Greig of The Foundry Makerspace in Bellingham, WA. Funded by the Friends of the Lynden Public Library, the Makerbot Replicator 2 is the only free, publicly accessible 3D printer in Whatcom County. The Lynden Library will offer teen and adult MakerLabs for free Mondays and Thursdays.

**Primary Source**, a new full-service agency serving libraries of all kinds with consultation and project management, launched October 24 with a celebration held in the historic Officer’s Club of the old Sand Point Naval Base in Seattle. Executive Director Kate Laughlin and many members of the Primary Source team welcomed about eighty library staff and advocates from across the Pacific NW. Utilizing its impressive roster of experts in all areas of libraries, Primary Source will assemble a customized team for every client’s job. Learn more about the agency by visiting primarysource.co.

Amanda C. R. Clark, MLIS, PhD, has accepted the position of the director of the library at **Whitworth University**. Clark spent one year as the interim director of the library before moving into the permanent position.

**Correction:** The recently retired Joan Weber worked at, but was not the director of, the Spokane Public Library, Spokane County Library or Washington State University, as reported in the July issue. Weber was, however, the first director of Pend Oreille County Library District. The editor regrets the error.
I’d Rather Be Reading

The Series: When Characters’ Lives Unfold Across Real Time in Literature, Readers Happily Follow Along

by David Wright

Richard Linklater’s thoroughly enjoyable film *Boyhood* recently premiered to the kind of universal rave reviews one almost never sees. Critics tripped over each other to assign the movie ever higher praise, calling it a groundbreaking unprecedented masterpiece, an incomparable and truly unique cinematic achievement, and even a miracle. The chief innovation that inspired such adoration was Linklater’s device of filming this coming-of-age story in what amounts to real time, filming the actors in intervals over an eleven year span to capture and reflect the maturation and aging of its principle actors. The result is indeed a very special movie, inviting comparison with Michael Apted’s brilliant series of *Up* documentaries that capture glimpses of its diverse subjects’ lives at seven year intervals, starting in 1964. In both cases, one experiences the passage of real time in a startlingly foreshortened way, a forced perspective on life.

Such revelatory vistas are indeed rare in film, but it occurred to me how much more common is the experience of characters’ lives unfolding across real time in literature. Consider Rabbit Angstrom, the protagonist of five titles written by John Updike: *Rabbit Run* (1960), *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit is Rich* (1980), *Rabbit at Rest* (1990) and the novella *Rabbit Remembered* (2001) in which the now deceased Angstrom is recalled by surviving relatives. The first four books were republished as the massive *Rabbit Angstrom Tetralogy* in 1995 (the eBook edition is far kinder to the wrists and forearms), and reading them in sequence provides an extraordinary window on the seasons of life and the mass preoccupations of four American decades, as the magnificently fallible Harry Angstrom struggles over and over to escape himself and find himself again.

While they were on full display from the start as Angstrom faltered at the doorstep of adulthood, Angstrom’s imperfections are made all the more significant by the indeterminate manner in which his saga unfolded. No character arc conceived in a single creative project could be so convincingly unfinished and chancy as is the life of Angstrom. Time itself is Updike’s collabo-

“…reading them (John Updike’s *Rabbit Angstrom Tetralogy*) in sequence provides an extraordinary window on the seasons of life and the mass preoccupations of four American decades, as the magnificently fallible Harry Angstrom struggles over and over to escape himself and find himself again.”

David Wright is a reader services librarian at the Central Branch of Seattle Public Library, a frequent speaker and trainer at library conferences, and a regular contributor to Booklist, The Seattle Times, and other publications.

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constructed Angstrom is a great litmus test for readers’ moral tolerance, Philip Roth’s serial narrator Nathan Zuckerman is an even better test. The self-obsessed narrator of nine novels yields a greater reward as well, as Zuckerman’s petty preoccupations in the early titles later gathered as Zuckerman Bound give way to a more expansive, mature outlook in later titles like American Pastoral and Exit Ghost. (Oddly enough, Updike’s own fictional alter ego Henry Bech, star of three novels spanning thirty years, is also Jewish.)

Somewhere between Updike’s everyman and Roth’s alter ego is Richard Ford’s novelist turned sportswriter turned real estate agent Frank Bascombe, protagonist of The Sportswriter (1986), Independence Day (1995), The Lay of the Land (2006), and now returned in Let Me Be Frank with You, four stories that provide a thoughtful coda to the Bascombe trilogy. Frank has a more upbeat angle on life’s confusions, disappointments and follies than these other two. It is not that his world makes more sense or is any less complex. Rather it seems, as we suspected, that some people are just less fraught than others. Having a periodic visit with Frank to mull things over has been a highlight for many readers over the years.

For readers less preoccupied with the concerns of aging white males than I am, there is Armistead Maupin’s Tales of the City books, and in particular the last three – Michael Tolliver Lives, Mary Ann in Autumn, and The Days of Anna Madrigal, in which we take up the lives of several characters twenty years after the initial series ended. Then there are Wendell Berry’s many novels and stories starting with Nathan Coulter (1960), which trace the passing decades in Port William, Kentucky. Genre readers are of course familiar with epic character arcs, epitomized Marcia Muller’s detective Sharon McCone, whose life we have watched unfold over thirty books, to date. Again and again in the pages of long-lived characters, we enjoy the sense of many years captured, turned and held to the light, for that rare and miraculous perspective that only time can bring.

Tiffany Coulson, a graduate student in the MLIS program at the University of Washington Information School, presented her analysis of issues related to women’s digital inclusion at the Internet Governance Forum in Istanbul. As a volunteer analyst for World Pulse, a global women’s network, Coulson studied solutions presented by women in more than seventy countries on digital access, digital literacy and digital empowerment. Special recommendations based on her analysis will be made to the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations), UN Women and library advocacy groups such as Beyond Access. Tiffany lives in Mattawa, Washington and attends the online program at the University of Washington.
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- Fort Vancouver Regional Library District
- Grandview Library
- Holman Library, Green River Community College
- Highline Community College Library
- James Brooks Library, Central WA University

- Jefferson County Library
- King County Library System
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