Conference Confluence: Thinking with the Flow

By Tim Mallory

I thought of the information flow in our libraries as I watched the Spokane River flush with spring snowmelt. That’s a huge flow! The river can be a destructive force. Many pieces of lumber, even massive trees, wash down the river, over banks and shoals of gravel, eroding away soil and mineral deposits. But we have learned to use the force of the river constructively. Through planning and teamwork, we harvest planks and gravel, make metal and cement from mineral deposits, create diversions, penstocks, and electric generators. Working together, those individual parts create the power to serve hundreds of thousands over a huge area. The flow, rather than eroding and tearing apart, is put to use building, creating, and nourishing.

We are living in a time where the information flow we experience is as overwhelming as Spokane Falls in springtime. While we are planning how to deal with the flood of information, it’s already happening all around us. What are our timbers and gravel? What are the structural elements that make up our library world? Disunited, we will wash away in the onrushing Internet flow. As individuals, we cannot master it. Working together, sharing tools and knowledge with a common plan, we can harness the power of the flow of information.

This is the real event. The flood of information is already here, and we are already working together.

The strength required to direct this flow of information into productive channels comes from cooperation, and cooperation from common purpose. While we see our common purpose in WLA, we share this purpose with many other groups made up of dedicated library advocates. WLA has a formal affiliation with a few of these groups, including the American Library Association (ALA), the Washington Library Media Association (WLMA), and the Pacific Northwest Library Association (PNLA). We could gain much strength by working at common purpose with the Special Libraries Association, the American Association of Law Libraries, the Medical Library Association, and others. While membership in an association gives us some aggregate strength, associations working together will give us the full strength of our entire profession.

As predicted by Marshall McLuhan, we live in a tribalized society. With our electronic connections, we can form our clan, karass, or family around whatever bonds we find most appealing. This connectivity leads to a multiplicity of allegiances, some to the medical librarians, some to the academic associations or to the Public Library Association, and others to the group of paraprofessionals. While reveling in this kinship, we still need to unite on issues concerning all of librarianship, while not losing our specialties and identities. Now we need to work together, affiliating our strengths to best represent the library profession and its role in controlling, directing, and making productive use of the ever-increasing flood of information accessible to everyone.

This is my view of the Spokane River. Divided into many small streams, any one can be dammed, diverted, absorbed, thwarted, or ignored. Taken together, they make up the impressive flow over Spokane Falls, and a major contribution to the mighty Columbia. So the world of information is our Columbia, and we are the necessary parts, the tools and techniques that, taken together, show mastery over that tremendous flow.

Thanks to Martha Parsons and the Spokane Conference Committee for putting on a fabulous conference, in a great location that inspires me to run on at such length. I hope we can accomplish the connections to make all our efforts as successful.

Tim Mallory is Adult Services coordinator for Timberland Regional Library.
“Alki,” a Native American word meaning “bye and bye,” was suggested by Nancy Pryor, Special Collections at Washington State Library, as the title for the Washington Library Association’s journal. “Alki” is also the state motto, signifying a focus on the future.

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

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By Julie Miller

“From the Editor

Summer may not be the best time to write about impact and influence. If you’re heading for a long weekend at the Oregon coast (or at “the lake,” for those of you on the eastern side of the state), I won’t hold it against you if this issue of Alki doesn’t make it into your beach bag. Or it may be the perfect time to consider your influence on others and their impact on you. A good friend (and long-time school librarian) once told me that “learners reflect.” The phrase has stuck with me. Consider these articles to be opportunities for reflection as you stretch out on the chaise longue.

Rand Simmons and members of the Washington team for National Library Legislative Day 2009 describe going to Washington, DC, to make a change—and finding the biggest change is in themselves. Mike Wirt provides a wrap-up of the state legislative session. In “Who’s on First,” Jonathan Betz-Zall remembers intellectual freedom activist Judith Krug and reminds us that we are all responsible for protecting the right to read freely. Jennifer Knight describes how a small group of youth-services students is having a big impact at the University of Washington’s iSchool. Samantha Becker and researchers at the iSchool study the impact of public access computing on U.S. communities.

If you missed “Impact and Influence,” WLA’s annual conference held in Spokane in April, this issue of Alki documents some of the highlights in word and image. (You can also listen to a podcast of ALA President Jim Rettig’s ALA/PLA breakfast speech at the Alki Café at http://wla.org/publications/alki/alki-cafe/.) Bo Kinney, Jenny Westlund, and Steve Duncan recap some of the conference sessions in their articles. Articles about or based on conference presentations are indicated with the conference logo. Be sure to check out the 2009 WLA award recipients, portraits of influence past, present, and future. And meet WLA’s new executive director, Dana Murphy-Love.

Slather on the sunscreen and make sure you have plenty of ice in the cooler. But don’t leave this issue of Alki at home. In the grand scheme of things, it’s okay if you get a little sand between the pages.

The National Library Legislative Day team went to Washington, DC, to make a change—and discovered the biggest change was in themselves.”

Instructions to Contributors


Articles should be in-depth examinations of issues of importance to Washington libraries. All works should be original. Unsolicited contributions and off-theme articles are encouraged. Submissions are edited. The editor and the Alki committee make the final decision on any submitted material. Typical article lengths range from one to three Alki pages, including artwork. A three-page article with artwork contains no more than 2,500 words.

Article text should be submitted as digital files in .doc or .rtf format. Artwork and photos should be transmitted as .tiff, .jpeg or .eps files. Alki printing requires high-resolution art and image files, preferably 300 dots per inch. Please include informative captions with artwork.

We recommend that you contact the editor before submitting artwork. Artwork will be returned on request.

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Please contact the Alki editor with questions or article ideas at alkieditor@wla.org.

The Alki Editorial Committee: Erin Krake, Julie Miller, Lynne King (seated); Susan Anderson, Matthew Berube, Bo Kinney, Deanna Sukkar, Michael Cook, Rayette Sterling

Julie Miller is Associate Dean of Libraries at Eastern Washington University
Who’s on First?

Without Judith Krug, Who Will Be on First?
by Jonathan Betz-Zall

Stop anyone on the street and ask what libraries stand for. After filtering out the obvious answer—“books”—you’re likely to hear something about intellectual freedom, specifically the right to read anything without government restriction. The person responsible for developing this reputation for libraries, Judith Krug, died this past April after a distinguished forty-year career with the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, of which she served as director since its inception in 1967. She also established the Freedom to Read Foundation in 1969, and she more or less led both programs simultaneously for the rest of her life. While eulogies to Ms Krug have been pouring into ALA’s offices since her death, I am very concerned that her absence may lead to erosion of ALA’s strong position on intellectual freedom.

Why is strong ALA leadership on this issue important to WLA and our members? Every public librarian encounters at least one intellectual freedom (IF) situation during a career; as a children’s librarian I did so regularly. I was fortunate to work for the Sno-Isle Regional Library System, which had (and has) a very strong IF policy and backs it up with regular review and training for all staff members. So I was always ready when someone objected to a particular book or kind of literature to respond in an appropriate manner. The IF ideas and materials developed by our library administration relied heavily on the resources provided by ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF). We also knew that OIF was willing, even eager, to support us with materials, public statements, and connections if we needed them. The result was a very strong sense of intellectual freedom as a value held by the library community. And the person behind all of this effort was the very same Judith Krug—she put the backbone into all of us through her considerable strength of personality.

How could this strong consensus come unraveled? Imagine this scenario: Library trustees in your community, influenced by news reports of “porn in the library,” insist on installing filters on all library computers, even though the US Supreme Court has said that filters have to be disabled for adults on request. Defiance or even discussion could get the library director fired. How will the library administration react? Is the principle of intellectual freedom worth the loss of the library director’s influence? What if censors threaten to oppose the library levy or bond issue elections? Should the library soft-pedal its principles to secure funding? These pressures are very powerful and very real in our state today. That’s why we need to stay vigilant and uphold our principles. A strong advocate such as Judith Krug is invaluable in these circumstances; without her, the library community has to find the next crusader for intellectual freedom or another way to maintain unity on this issue.

“Founder’s Syndrome” is another danger following the loss of a strong leader. This term describes a situation in which an organization is so dominated by its founder that it cannot change in response to altered circumstances. The founder has such a charismatic personality that everyone else just follows. When the leader is lost, no one else knows how to carry on. Fortunately, good advice is available on how to cope with Founder’s Syndrome. In her article “Founder’s Syndrome—Who, Me?,” Hildy Gottlieb concludes: “Just as we have the obligation in real life to make plans for the future of our children in the event something happens to us...we owe the community the pledge that we will do the same for the gift we have given them.” Who will be on First for ALA and the library community? ALA’s new “bare bones” Web site provides little indication of how the Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Freedom to Read Foundation will cope with the loss of this great leader. I hope WLA’s Chapter Councilor will monitor this situation and report the progress being made there.

Judith Krug put the backbone into all of us through her considerable strength of personality.

Judith Krug was director of the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom and founder of the Freedom to Read Foundation.

Jonathan Betz-Zall is reference librarian and library instructor at Highline Community College and Shoreline Community College. He has served as the ALA Chapter Councilor for the Washington Library Association.

ALKI • July 2009
**IYouth: Filling a Need and Making an Impact**

by Jennifer Knight

IYouth was born out of a conversation on a bus to Ballard. Cofounders Stefanie Graen and I found ourselves on the same bus and began talking about how there seemed to be activities for other special interest groups at the University of Washington’s iSchool, but nothing for people interested in youth services. That conversation begat a book club and several training events. We averaged anywhere from twelve to 25 people at our meetings. It was only when the group decided that we wanted snacks for our book club that Anne Dame, Elizabeth Mitchell, Stephanie Dunnewind, and I decided to write a constitution and make the group a legitimate student organization. IYouth is an iSchool student organization committed to providing training and networking opportunities for students and youth services professionals. Our events are entirely student run and engineered. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

The group remains true to its organic roots—our modus operandi has been that if a student has an idea and wants to plan a program that fits in our broad mission, go for it. Part of our motivation for the group was to allow students the opportunity to show leadership, part of the iSchool’s portfolio requirement. In the past two years, the group has hosted a monthly book club, social events, and panel discussions on such topics as how to work with authors, what youth services jobs look like, and multicultural communication. Everyone in the group had a role in making programs and events happen.

The idea for a conference came out of a conversation several of us had with Nancy Pearl in our BookLust 101 class. A few of us were lamenting the fact there were only two BookLust classes and asked Nancy if she’d ever thought about teaching a class on readers’ advisory for children and youth. When we told her about IYouth, she suggested we consider planning a day-long event and invite area youth services professionals to speak. A week later, we were started planning.

This past January IYouth partnered with the Washington Library Association’s Children and Young Adult Services (CAYAS) special interest group, the Association of Library & Information Science Students (ALISS), and the Information School Development Office to offer the IYouth conference for area youth services professionals and students. The day-long conference featured local library professionals and included sessions on such topics as technology, integrating music into early literacy storytimes, and manga. Speakers for the event included Nancy Pearl, Nancy Stewart, Maren Ostergard, John Marino, Susan Anderson-Newham, Arika Dickens, Erica Sternin, Cecilia McGowan, Rachel Bohn, Jerene Batisti, Heather McNamee Card, and Teresa McCausland.

CAYAS, the Information School Development Office, and ALISS provided seed money for the event. The event was advertised around the region, to the Washington Library Association, the Oregon Library Association, Washington Library Association, and the Alumni Association. Nancy lent her support to the conference early in the process, first by inspiring us, and then, later, by generously agreeing to be our keynote speaker. Other area professionals volunteered their time to speak at the event. Conference sessions were entirely planned and hosted by LIS students.

When we started planning the conference, we had no idea whether or not anyone would come. We thought the event would attract maybe thirty students. Some 130 registrations later, we discovered there is a need for inexpensive training for youth services professionals. We never dreamed we would have to turn people away because the event was “full.” Registrants hailed from all over the state and were a nearly even mix of students, public librarians, and school librarians. We were able to offer clock hours for the event, which helped to draw some of the school library media folks. Trainings such as this are one way to bridge the communication and cultural gap that sometimes exists between school and public libraries.

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IYouth Conference Check-

Participants register for the IYouth conference.

Save The Date!

Saturday, January 30, 2010

Upcoming Registration:
For information on registration, check out the Web site at http://students.washington.edu/iyouthuw/

Confirmed speakers include Nancy Pearl, Angelina Benedetti, Jerene Batisti, and Debra Branham-Harris.

IYouth 2009 Event Planning Committee

Rachel Adams, YunJu Chen, Mary Comstock, Anne Dame, Renee Disch, Stephanie Dunnewind, Stefanie Graen, Jennifer Knight, Elizabeth Mitchell, Laura Schick, Jody Segal, Erin Sterling

Jennifer Knight is a recent graduate of the University of Washington’s MLIS program.
Measuring the Impact of Public Access Computing: A Nationwide Research Initiative with Local Roots

by Samantha Becker, Karen E. Fisher, & Michael D. Crandall

Free access to computers and the Internet has become one of the most popular services libraries offer. In 2007, public libraries in Washington logged over 6.5 million user sessions on public access computers; nationwide the number exceeds 600 million (Miller 2009). Even though these numbers convey incredible demand for public access computing (PAC) services, they don’t provide policy makers enough information to make budget decisions in an environment increasingly focused on measuring the value of public services by the degree to which they contribute to broader policy goals. They also don’t provide much useful information to libraries wanting to evaluate their services and better meet the needs of their communities.

The U.S. IMPACT studies, a research initiative headed by Karen Fisher and Mike Crandall at the University of Washington Information School, is going beyond counting user sessions and PAC terminals to measure and report the impact of PAC resources in public libraries on individuals, families, and communities. The results will describe the extent of PAC use and provide a starting point for developing an outcomes-focused performance measurement framework that libraries can use to show how the public benefits from PAC services. The research includes a nationwide telephone survey, a nationwide Internet-based survey administered through library Web sites, and four in-depth case studies.

Although national in scope, the U.S. IMPACT studies have roots that extend throughout Washington. Many MLIS students from the Information School are working on the study; the telephone survey was tested at the Seattle Public Library; and we conducted a test run of our case study protocols at the Mt. Vernon Public Library. In addition, eleven Washington public libraries were selected for participation in the Web survey. The research is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Background

In surveys, librarians frequently report that they help patrons use PAC resources to learn technology skills, complete homework assignments, turn in job applications, and access government resources, among other purposes (e.g. Bertot, McClure & Jaeger, 2008). While useful for identifying the different types of PAC use, these surveys can’t get at the extent of these activities among patrons or show how they benefit from PAC. Did the patron use the technology skills she learned to communicate with her grandchildren? When the child finished his homework, did he investigate college? Did the job applicant get hired? Was the citizen able to contact her representative?

The results of the IMPACT study will describe the extent of the use of public access computing and provide a framework that libraries can use to show how the public benefits from these services.

Methods

No single research method can capture the breadth and depth of how PAC impacts people’s lives. The IMPACT studies will generate three sources of data, each with its own important contribution to understanding PAC users. The telephone survey data will provide a representative picture of the prevalence of different types of people using public access computers and how access to computers benefits them. The web survey will augment data gathered through the telephone survey. The case studies will provide information about contextual influences on library outcomes. Taken together, these three data sources will capture a holistic picture of computer and Internet use in public libraries and test the validity of findings.

Telephone survey

The telephone survey was developed through an iterative process with the research team and the expert committee. The survey asks some general questions like frequency of use and the availability of alternative access, as well as specific types of use across the seven domains and use on behalf of others. The goal for the telephone survey is to complete interviews with 1,130 PAC users. This number will allow us to estimate the number of people in the United States who use PAC resources at a +/- 3.5% margin of error.

The Seattle Public Library facilitated a pretest of the telephone survey at the main branch in February, 2009. Mike Crandall and three MLIS students interviewed ten PAC users, reading them the survey verbatim and then debriefing the respondents to ensure that the questions were understood as intended. The interviews provided valuable feedback that was incorporated into a revised survey.
instrument. The telephone survey is currently under way and will be completed in mid-July. We estimate that it will take about 80,000 phone calls to reach our 1,130 PAC users!

**Web survey**

While telephone surveys are one of the few ways to gather generalizable data, considering the number of calls needed to reach a relatively small segment of the population, it’s not a very cost-effective one. The IMPACT Web survey was designed to be a cost-effective supplement to the telephone survey and also to reach populations, such as youth and homeless persons, who are frequently missed by telephone surveys. The Web survey is essentially the same instrument as the telephone survey, with only minor variations to account for the different platform.

We asked a random sample of 636 library systems across the country, including eleven from Washington, to make the survey available to their patrons by linking to it from their library Web sites or PAC browsers for a designated two-week period. As an incentive for their participation, libraries will be provided a comprehensive report on the data collected through their public access system and how it relates to nationwide and peer system findings.

Overall, the Web survey is expected to yield approximately 60,000 completed surveys with an overall response rate of approximately 12%. Using the telephone survey as a reference, the Web survey data will be weighted to help correct for bias resulting from respondent self-selection (cf. Lee and Valliant, 2009). This statistical approach will blend the datasets and allow greater flexibility for analysis at the item-level where the telephone survey alone is unlikely to produce generalizable results.

State librarians, including Washington’s Jan Walsh, were a great help in coordinating the Web survey effort. But even more credit goes to the hundreds of local librarians and technical staff all across the country who took the time to make the survey available to their patrons. As of the seventh of nine fielding periods, we have received over 40,000 completed surveys and are continuing to receive over 1,000 each day. Though the survey officially closed on June 15, we intend to make it available to the library community to use for their own patron research.

**Case studies**

While quantitative data can provide useful descriptions of PAC users and activities, they cannot explain differences in outcomes or impacts, nor can they confirm whether the indicators are relevant to policy makers. In order to generate explanatory and confirmatory insights, and to identify the contextual factors that influence PAC outcomes, we conducted case studies in four public libraries:

- the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland (population 632,941);
- the Blair Public Library in Fayetteville, Arkansas (population 57,491);
- the Oakland Public Library in California (population 431,634); and
- the Marshalltown Public Library in Iowa (population 30,353).

The interview instruments, profile frameworks, and fielding protocols were tested with the Mount Vernon City Library in Washington (population 26,232) in August, 2008. The library staff were gracious enough to allow students to practice interview techniques with their patrons.

Across these five sites, we conducted interviews with 187 users (59 minors), 66 library staff administrators, fourteen library board members, and 48 community providers and government representatives. Before visiting each site, the research team prepared in-depth library and community profiles and, while at each location, also recorded observations about the behavior and activities of PAC users. We spent one week at each site conducting observations, interviews, and focus groups with PAC users ages fourteen and up. We also conducted interviews with frontline library staff, administrators, IT staff, and persons from allied organizations, as well as mini-interviews with people at Internet cafes, tourist offices, and other community focal points.

An emerging finding from the user interviews is that the majority use PAC on behalf of other people, both to look up information and as instrumental help (e.g., submitting forms) for situations of everyday living.

**Results**

Results from the IMPACT studies will be disseminated starting in September, 2009. We will be communicating the findings to library funders and policy makers in the seven domains. We will also prepare materials and conduct Webinars to help libraries use the study to show the value of public access computing in their communities.

More information about the IMPACT studies can be found on the project Web site [http://impact.ischool.washington.edu](http://impact.ischool.washington.edu).

**References**


“Libraries offend everyone,” proclaims the ALA’s 12 Ways Libraries Are Good For the Country, encouraging libraries to hang a sign on the door reading: “If you are not offended by something we own, please complain.” Protecting readers’ rights to challenging, provocative material is something libraries are good at, and it truly is one of the qualities that make libraries valuable.

But this doesn’t mean that libraries aim to offend every patron all of the time. Most librarians don’t go out of their way to shock and disturb; they generally don’t begin a reader’s advisory interview by asking the patron, “What do you find most offensive?”

Two programs at this year’s annual WLA conference highlighted libraries’ efforts to collect and recommend books at all levels of offensiveness. The Intellectual Freedom interest group’s (IFIG) conference session “Banned Books Week: How to Do It Better” featured a panel of booksellers and librarians sharing ideas for displays and programs of books that have been so offensive that they have been challenged or banned in schools and libraries. And in Outreach and Literacy for Everyones’s (OLE) “Squeaky Clean, Part 2,” a pair of librarians presented booktalks on thirty books that would offend no one—good books with no violence, profanity, or sex.

Banned Books Week was founded in 1982 by Judith Krug, director of ALA’s Office of Intellectual Freedom. (Krug passed away only days before this conference.) Every year in the last week of September, libraries, schools, and booksellers celebrate individuals’ First Amendment right to read by recognizing books that have been challenged or banned. Presenters at the conference session gave examples of some of the successful events and displays they have organized during this week.

All of the Banned Books Week presenters suggested incorporating the reasons why specific books are challenged in order to generate discussion about censorship. Chris O’Harra, of Auntie’s Bookstore in Spokane, even suggested creating a list of the “Top Ten Most Ridiculous Reasons for Banning a Book.” D. T. Suzuki’s Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings, for example, was challenged because “the reader could very likely embrace its teachings and choose this as his religion.” And The Diary of Anne Frank was challenged because “it’s a ‘real downer.’”

Adrian Pauw, a librarian at Gonzaga University, demonstrated a banned books display she developed for Gonzaga’s library. To create the display, she placed books that have been banned or challenged inside black paper bags. She wrote quotes about the books and why they were challenged on the outside of the bags. Readers can see the quotes as they walk by, but must look inside the bags to see the books. The display symbolizes “how censorship allows those who ban books to silence, cloak, override, or stigmatize the value of ideas contained in the books.”

Pauw’s display invited discussion about book banning, although not always in the way she had intended. Once, while the display was up at Gonzaga, two students were looking at the bags and investigating the books inside. Finally they approached the reference desk and asked, “Who should we talk to if we want another book to be banned? Because these bags are all full.”

“All readers have different values, but they should all be able to find something they value at the library.”

“A Duty to Offend?”

by Bo Kinney
If you are employed by one of the larger library systems in Washington State, chances are you are represented by a union. And, whether or not you have personally been involved in a situation where you felt your rights had been threatened, your union has been working for you. Library unions act as the mechanism to correct unequal treatment of employees, which can take the form of pay inequities, scheduling conflicts, unfair vacation allotment, or ergonomic and workplace health and safety issues. The latter are particularly critical with the implementation of automated materials handling processes in many library systems, in addition to the increasing volume of materials circulation at most libraries.

Igloo? No, IGLU! The Interest Group for Libraries and Unions (IGLU) was sanctioned by WLA in 2004 through the efforts of a trio of like-minded colleagues. Cameron Johnson (Everett Public Library, and President, AFSCME Local 113), Cher Ravagni (Seattle Public Library, and member of the Local 2083 Executive Board), and Susan Veltfort (King County Library System and President, Local 1857), all recognized a need for a union-related interest group at WLA. They felt that a union-related interest group would provide an open forum for discussion of labor-related issues, would serve to inform and educate library staff members on the relevance of unions in library settings, and would increase understanding of the potential benefits of union membership. Through conference programs, workshops, and other events, IGLU would have the potential to reach an even wider audience of library workers, whether they were members of a union or not.

Since its formation, IGLU has followed its mission “to explore the extent of the presence and role of unions among library workers in Washington State, to encourage ongoing research on unionization in libraries, and to serve as a resource for both active and developing unions of library workers in Washington State” through conference programs such as “The Not-So-Odd Couple: Libraries & Unions,” a forum on the history of Washington libraries and unions, and “Workplace Rights At Risk” (with John N. Berry III, editor in chief of Library Journal). In keeping with this year’s conference theme, Impact and Influence, IGLU presented “Are We Getting Along?: Who Has Influence in the Workplace,” a lively panel discussion with Sharon Hammer, retired Fort Vancouver Library, and Diana Pengruber, Washington State Council of County and City Employees. The panelists discussed who may or may not have the potential to impact or influence in the workplace. Who are the power players? Those you’d expect: funders, members of the board of trustees/supervisors, directors and the library administration, AND any library staff or library users who are motivated, clever, or angry enough to try to solve the problem. Those in positions of power do not necessarily hold all of the power.

Sharon Hammer urged participants to use every employee in the workplace and build teams from all staff levels. People at all job levels have knowledge and information. She encouraged us to invite participation, listen, and thank people for their help. Hammer explained that the disconnect between management and workers may be a result of management not working their way up from the ranks or not understanding the “front line” experience. True leaders gather input from all levels of the organization. Library directors and administrators should make themselves accessible to staff, but in many organizations, the hierarchy is so rigid that staff are discouraged from talking to anyone at a higher level than their immediate supervisor. Larger organizations include more layers between front line staff and the director or administrators, and communication and collaboration may come more naturally in smaller organizations.

Diana Pengruber described what unions have to offer to a workplace. She noted that there are three primary reasons that staff members decide to organize: wages and benefits, job security, and working conditions. Staff members want to feel valued and that they have a voice. Most library employees take pride in the service they provide, and they love their organization, but they may not always love their supervisor or director. With a union, staff have a means to voice their concerns and grievances. Without two-way communication, staff can feel under-valued, and morale may suffer. Labor management committees can be a way to avoid filing of grievances or other labor responses.

Pengruber noted that there is a difference between having influence and getting your own way. If you have concerns over an issue and have been speaking your piece but don’t have influence, you will rarely see the desired outcome. If you have been vocalizing your ideas and concerns, but you are not being heard, approach your su-
A Duty to Offend?  Continued from page 9

Libraries may have, as the ALA proclaims, a “duty to offend.” But they have an equal, though less sexy, duty to help readers find books that don’t offend. Theresa Gemmer and Bonnie Gerken, outreach librarians at Everett Public Library and Sno-Isle Libraries, respectively, offered tips for serving the easily offended through their second installment of “well-written books with no graphic violence, profanity, or explicit sex.” (Their first program on this topic, entitled “We Are Not Offended,” was presented at the 2004 WLA/PNLA joint conference.)

Readers might be interested in “squeaky clean” books for many reasons. They may find violence, profanity, or sex offensive, or they may be interested in having a break from these characteristics. Or, as one audience member mentioned, they may simply find profanity embarrassing when reading aloud.

Gemmer and Gerken stressed how difficult it can be to find these elusive inoffensive books. While some authors, like M. C. Beaton and Debbie Macomber, are reliably clean—Gemmer and Gerken recommend Beaton’s *Death of a Dreamer* and Macomber’s *Midnight Sons*—others, like Rita Mae Brown, vary from book to book, or series to series—Gemmer and Gerken recommend Brown’s *Santa Clawed* as one of her rare mysteries with no explicit violence.

At first, these two very different sessions might seem to present a contradiction: either libraries offend or they repress; either they disturb or they soothe. But in fact, libraries do all of this, and more, without contradiction. It is our duty to offend, or at least to offer reading material that some find offensive. And it is equally our duty to offer material that readers will find comforting and safe. All readers have different values, but they should all be able to find something they value at the library.

“Banned books” panelists Chris O’Harra, Adrian Pauw, Sweet Pea, and Bonnie Svitasky

Libraries and Unions  Continued from previous page

“Pengruber noted that there is a difference between having influence and getting your own way.”

As a supervisor and ask why your ideas aren’t being acknowledged. Solicit her advice on how to become more effective in being heard and of getting your ideas implemented.

The panelists agreed that a workplace union may be the only means for staff to voice grievances and to express input or concerns about conditions and management decisions. A union provides a way to foster a collaborative relationship.

Impact and Influence?  Definitely. Unions provide a voice for employees to air concerns or ask questions of their organization without fear of discipline or retribution. When a union asks a question on behalf of many employees, not only is the question more likely to be answered, but the process helps to promote transparency in library decisions and operations. Whether or not you have personally been invested in a workplace grievance, or other labor-related process, you can have confidence that your union is invested in you.
National Library Legislative Day: Reflections on Impact and Influence

by Rand Simmons

Here's the drill: The alarm clock rings at 5 a.m. By 6 a.m., get in the car and drive north on I-5 with the Seattle commuters. Slow down at Fort Lewis; slow down at Bridgeport; slow down at Krispy Kreme's ... 7 a.m. Check bag too big to carry on because it's loaded with packets for the legislators. Security: 7:30 a.m. Must have latte ... 8:00 a.m. Still an hour before boarding. Take out "must read" work items from black bag ... 8:35 a.m. At last we begin to board. 9 a.m. Finally seated. I settle down for a long four-to-five hour ride depending on how much wind is at our collective backsides ... I know that three days of intense activity awaits me. My heart pounds a little harder. God, I love this stuff.

WLA's Federal Relations Program

So what is the Federal Relations program of the Washington Library Association about? Two things: 1) Informing WLA members about federal issues important to them—and important to Washington libraries; 2) Informing our federal leaders about issues that are important to WLA members—and to Washington libraries.

The federal relations program informs the WLA membership about issues such as the reauthorization of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), which will happen later this year. LSTA makes a difference to Washington libraries by providing funding for continuing education grants and for projects such as the “Hard Times” initiative to provide library resources and services for job seekers. The program also seeks volunteers to make phone calls or send emails to congressional representatives and senators to tell them why issues are important. (For more information about how you can have an impact on federal legislators, see the insert on page 14 about the Washington Federal Library Legislation and Advocacy Network – WA FLLAN.)

The second purpose of the Federal Relations program has to do with our annual effort to influence our federal legislators during American Library Association’s National Library Legislative Day. Each year a team is formed consisting of five or six WLA members who volunteer their time. This year's team, led by Rand Simmons of the Washington State Library, included: Mike Wirt, director at Spokane County Library District and WLA’s Legislative Committee co-chair; Jan Walsh, Washington State librarian; Mary Jo Torgeson, director at Puyallup Public Library; and Marilyn Mitchell, trustee at Jefferson County Library and representative of the Washington Library Friends, Foundations, Trustees and Advocates interest group (WLFFT A). Mary Carr, dean of Instructional Services and Telecommunications at Spokane Community College, joined us while she traveled on Association of College and Research Libraries business. Kristie Kirkpatrick, director of the Whitman County Library District, stayed behind this year but made all the congressional visit appointments—no small task!

The Issues

The first day of NLLD is a briefing from ALA on hot issues and presentations from experts. After the morning briefing session the team gathers for lunch and plans a strategy for the visits. This year we do two Congressional visits during the afternoon. Which topics will we cover? Who will take the lead for each visit? Who will cover which of the topics?

The 2009 National Library Legislative Team from Washington (left to right): Jan Walsh, Marilyn Mitchell, Mary Carr, Mike Wirt, Mary Jo Torgeson, Rand Simmons

The Library Services and Technology Act is our first priority. Our “ask” is that the Congressperson support the full appropriation at $300 million. President Obama’s budget is for $214,432 million–$85,568 million shy. At each office, we tell how having the full appropriation this year brought a little over $200,000 in extra LSTA dollars to Washington. This additional funding allowed the State Library to open up the targeted competitive grant cycle for libraries dealing with customers affected by recent “hard times.”

We encourage Senators Murray and Cantwell to sign the Reed-Snowe “Dear Colleague” letter regarding full appropriation for LSTA. Senator Cantwell’s staffer states that the signature is already in process. Senator Murray’s staffer explains that the Senator does not sign these letters. We press for a firm commitment on the issue. Sixty signatures are needed in the Senate to pass a bill. Although the Democrats have a majority, they are finding it tough to pass anything. This is a difficult year in which to get commitments from federal legislators.

We also ask all Washington senators and representatives to support reauthorization of LSTA later this year. We explain the Act needs to be broadened to support continuing education for the Washington library community. They ask for and we promise to send language later in the year. Several team members explain what LSTA means in their libraries. There is no state aid for public libraries in Washington. For many libraries LSTA is the only additional source of funding. During each visit we hand out a packet prepared by Washington State Library staff showing how LSTA has benefited libraries in their congressional district. (Senators get a statewide view).

Secondly, we request full appropriation at the $100 million level for the Improving Literacy through School Libraries Program. The President’s budget is a pitiful $19,145 million.

On to E-Rate. We may only have fifteen minutes at each visit so we keep the topics moving. We ask the Congressperson’s support for S.348/HR. 2135 which would provide a permanent exemption from the “Anti-Deficiency Act” by amending Section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934. Exemptions have heretofore been year by year. We also ask the Congressperson to urge the FCC to accept the American Library Association’s proposal for simplification of the E-Rate application process. A simplified process would encourage more Washington libraries—particularly small and mid-sized libraries—to apply.

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without the services of a costly consultant.

The second day is devoted to visits with senators and representatives or, in their absence, with their staff. We are able to visit with Senator Cantwell again this year but all other visits are with staff. We are not able to get appointments with Representatives Rodgers, McDermott, and Reichert.

At the Cantwell visit, we thank the Senator Cantwell for her support last year by sending a letter to the FCC chair. She tells her staffer to draft a letter again this year. Our spirits lift.

With the Senate visits we encourage support of S. Res. 118 so that articles resulting from federally funded research will be made available through a centralized electronic system for purposes of access and retrieval by the public. Mary Carr explains why this is important to academic libraries.

Finally we come to our last issue, the USA PATRIOT Act. Three sections of the PATRIOT Act, including Section 215, the “business/library records provision,” will sunset this year. We ask that Congress modify this section to protect the privacy of library customers and prevent needless warrant less surveillance. We remind each office of the Whatcom County Library District incident, in which the FBI demanded to know who had checked out a book about Osama bin Laden. Most are familiar with the story.

The day following NLLD three of us attend Senator Murray’s constituent coffee before we fly home. At the end of NLLD we send thank-you messages to the congressional offices and summarize the issues that we discussed. Does it matter? Seth Burroughs, legislative assistant to Representative Rick Larsen’s office responds in this manner: “Thanks for the recap, I appreciate you following up. You’d be surprised how many times I ask various groups to touch base with me following meetings, and it rarely happens.”

Impact and Influence
Shortly after returning home we receive word that Senator Cantwell has signed the Reed-Snowe “Dear Colleague” letter supporting full appropriation of LSTA. I’d like to think that we were influential in getting her signature so soon after our departure. We follow up with a thank you. NLLD team members believe in what they do. “I think it’s important for the Washington congressional delegation to hear from their own constituents about library issues,” Mike Wirt states. Jan Walsh echoes Mike’s thought, noting that federal legislators and their staff want to hear what we have to say. “I truly believe we plant seeds and make contacts, often for future connections on library critical issues. Most of the aides/assistants/policy directors asked that we get back to them at the time of LSTA reauthorization, for instance.”

“I wanted them to hear first hand how difficult it is to complete the E-Rate paperwork, and we need their help to contact the FCC to change their rules,” says Mary Jo Torgeson. “In the case of the recession, many libraries in our state are being impacted, and the LSTA funds given to small libraries like Puyallup, through databases, training, and grants, truly make a difference.” This is an ongoing process as Mary Jo states so well. “We need to keep hammering away about what a good investment it is to support libraries. Each year we visit, and each year those staffers discuss the specific issues that impact our congressional leaders. However, when we talk to staffers about library issues that relate specifically to their region, it is obvious that a connection is made.”

At the end of the day, does this connection matter? Brian Soneda, WLA’s Vice President/President Elect and Director at Mount Vernon City Library, thinks so. “Don’t for a second underestimate the power of citizen advocates to get and keep elected officials’ attention on National Library Legislative Day. When five or six people who flew across the country, taking time from their busy work and family lives back home, to earnestly and skillfully speak on behalf of libraries and the library-serving public, for the ten or fifteen minutes the senator or representative has in his or her busy schedule, IT MATTERS. THIS IMPRESS ELECTED OFFICIALS.”

And there are successes. “I think that the impact is demonstrated by actual results of the full funding of the LSTA program last year, the ability of libraries to provide their patrons with better digital connectivity because of the E-Rate program, and a greater feeling of privacy with regard to patrons’ library activities from previous USA PATRIOT Act National Security Letter modifications.”

Mary Jo Torgeson notes, “We discussed E-rate with Cantwell in 2008 and she wrote a letter to the FCC requesting simplification. Given that Section 215 of the PATRIOT Act is coming up for reauthorization, many of the staffers we talked with had heard about the issues faced by Whatcom County Library and understood the impact the PATRIOT Act can have on the local level around patron privacy.”

Kristie Kirkpatrick points to the success of the reopening of the Environmental Protection Agency libraries and the support of Senator Cantwell. “We can’t necessarily claim all the credit, but we did our part, and I believe we were influential.”

Be the Change You Want to See
For many team members, there is a sense of personal satisfaction in participating in NLLD. Mary Jo Torgeson says, “I participate in this lobbying because it is a small way to help do my part to make our congressional leaders hear about libraries. It also has an impact on me and how to keep our Senators and Representative informed about their local communities.”

“It was certainly an honor to serve in this capacity,” Brian Soneda reflects. “Being chosen as a team member means that someone believes that you have the right stuff to participate in formulating a coherent message to take to our state’s Senators and Representatives, and then to help the team skillfully articulate that message.” Brian was a member of the Washington NLLD team in 2006 and 2007.

Brian goes on to note, “Being part of the NLLD team changes you. You get a bigger picture of how our government works. You see the warts and the roadblocks but you also see the possibilities and the majesty. By majesty I don’t mean how cool the Capitol is. I mean how wonderful this thing we call repre-
sentative democracy is, how lucky we are to have it, and what our obligations as citizens are if we want to keep it. And being changed, how you handle your day job changes. You see the connections better and you see the big picture better. If something as big as Big Government can work (not always well but well enough to be here, well into a third century), your day job can work. And that change inside you doesn’t fade away.”

Participating in NLLD appeals to Mike Wirt, Co-Chair of the WLA Legislative Committee. “It’s a natural complement to my state legislative responsibilities,” he notes. “But also, I’ve come to realize that I’m a political junkie. I think the process is fascinating at both the state and federal level.”

“On a personal level, the NLLD visits have made me take a more active role in being able to discuss library issues to legislators both nationally and in this state,” states Mary Jo Torgeson. “By having someone physically talking to a staffer, it has more impact than an email or letter.”

Trustee Marilyn Mitchell puts it this way: “On reflection it seems to me that participation in NLLD is somewhat like a Peace Corps experience. You think you are going to go out and change all those people but the one who is really changed is yourself and your understanding of the world and how it operates. Participating in NLLD provides the opportunity to understand the legislative process at a personal level. While we know that money and power equal the influence that drives our national decisions, we see that there is a place for the individual voice and small groups of voices as well. Like dripping water on a hard stone, our voices make small impacts. When there is a glint of recognition in an aide’s expression, followed by ‘we talked last year,’ you feel that small impact. When there is a nod of understanding and acknowledgment that our requests are not only reasonable but important, you feel that small impact growing.

“NLLD forces us to articulate our cause, clearly and succinctly. It’s good training for when we come home and articulate that same cause over and over in our libraries and communities resulting in more small and growing impacts. We tell our stories over and over. When we hear someone else telling our story as if it were theirs, we see our influence and can believe in its impact.”

Next year’s National Library Legislative Day will be connected to the 2010 American Library Association annual conference in Washington, DC. Are you interested in joining the team? Please let us know.

Exercise Your Influence: Join WA FLLAN

So why should we form a Washington chapter of the Federal Library Legislative and Advocacy Network (WA FLLAN). Well, not because we need something that sounds like a jiggly, caramel dessert!

The point is you can’t just walk away after National Library Legislative Day and say, “my work is done.” Even more important than NLLD is the work we—and by “we” I mean you, dear reader, and me—do throughout the year.

“I see this in terms of a ‘we’ broader than just those of us who make this trip,” notes Mike Wirt. “It’s the ‘we’ of the entire library community speaking with one voice about issues that are important to it…. As Steve Duncan [WLA lobbyist] stresses in his advocacy training, it’s all about building relationships rather than being a one-shot exercise. We would have more influence if there was more communication throughout the year.”

Brian Soneda makes this point: “Follow up. Follow up on your conversations. Get back to your elected officials soon about the concerns or ideas you raised. Use that contact as an excuse to bring up other things of concern. Talk to the local office of the senator or representative. Ask them for their help on matters small and large. Thank them sincerely when they come through for you.”

So what are we hoping for this year? Simply this: Individuals who are willing to speak up on behalf of Washington’s libraries connected through one communication system willing and ready to contact their elected officials by phone, email, or in person. Our goal this year is to have one person from each of our nine congressional districts as members of our Federal Library Legislation and Advocacy Network. Are you ready to participate? Please Contact Rand Simmons at randman51@comcast.net or Kristie Kirkpatrick at kirkpatr@colfax.com.
Earlier this year at the annual WLA conference in Spokane, I gave a presentation on effective advocacy. It was the same presentation I gave last year, and it’s the same one I will give next year. The secrets to becoming an effective advocate do not change from year to year. In fact, there are no secrets, just consistent application of some common-sense principles. Consistency is the key—it’s like mowing the lawn or changing the oil in your car. Essentially, advocacy involves never-ending chores. Day in and day out, year in and year out, effective advocates advocate all the time.

Advocating is communicating. The methods of communication generally fall into two categories: “Direct” communication occurs during conversation at a meeting, or through a phone call, a letter, an e-mail, or text message; “indirect” communication occurs through a speech or testimony that is heard by your target audience, or through a newspaper ad or article, a television spot, a radio spot, or a visit to a Web site. My focus is on direct communication with decision-makers.

Know Your Audience
To communicate your message effectively, put yourself in the listeners’ position. Look at the world through their eyes so your message can then be framed from their perspective, not yours. After all, it’s not what you said that counts, it’s what they heard. The web is a great source of information to learn more about the recipient of your potential message. For legislators you can read up on not only their background, but also their committee assignments and the bills they have sponsored. Knowing about them beforehand allows you to tailor your message.

For example, if you are speaking to a legislator who sits on the Finance Committee and who has sponsored tax bills about a library annexation issue, the legislator has a better chance of understanding the details about your library issue quickly. But, if the legislator only sits on human services committees, you may have to expand your message to spend more time on background about your library issue.

Timing Is Important
Regardless of whether or not your legislator shares your position on an issue, you should always appreciate just how busy legislators are and how many different issues they encounter in a single day. Someone described the experience of being a legislator as “drinking from a fire hose.”

During the legislative session, the average legislator sits on three committees that meet three times a week for two hours per meeting. At these meetings, public testimony will be given for ten to fifteen different pieces of legislation. In addition to committee meetings, legislators also spend the better part of two days a week in “floor time,” where the House and Senate each meet. Throughout each day they receive 150 to 300 e-mail messages, get another fifty letters, and take in 100-200 phone messages. Blocks of ten-minute appointments fill out the rest of the day, and the remaining “moments” are filled by people making their pitch to legislators as they walk from one meeting to the next. You can understand why legislators don’t wake up in the morning asking what they can do for their library today! You can also appreciate why their attention span is so short.

Connecting with your legislator takes time and effort, and can be a counter-intuitive process. It’s best done when the legislature is not in session. Their schedules are less intense, and they can focus more clearly on you and your issue. Use the concept of “making friends before you need them” by making contact when your legislator is not under pressure.

Make Meaningful Contact
I’ve noticed that people often over-prepare for their meeting with a legislator. They view it as their one and probably only opportunity to make their case, and they end up taking the “encyclopedia” approach. Loaded with facts, figures, and studies, they want to make sure every potential point is covered. Unfortunately, this approach usually causes the legislator to glaze over from information overload.

It’s better to have one meeting lead to the next. The second encounter may be a follow-up letter or thank-you note, but the frequency of contact is the key. Think of it in these terms: What television or radio ads are you most likely to remember? The ones you hear once, or the ones you hear frequently? As we all know, some of those repetitious TV ads can be annoying. When does frequency of contact become annoying? When you keep saying the same thing over and over again. Use a little creativity and develop ways to put a different spin on your message.

To increase a legislator’s familiarity with you, don’t feel compelled to limit your outreach solely to library issues. If your legislator has done something you like, especially if it’s not library related, write a note stating your appreciation.

Strategies for Urgent Situations
If you have a complex issue that is urgent, you may not have the luxury of developing a relationship with your legislator over time. You may find yourself approaching a legislator in the middle of session when time is limited. In situations like these, you still need to consider your legislator’s perspective, but your message should be distilled to its very essence. If you are sending or leaving behind materials, they should not exceed one page

*Steve Duncan is the Washington Library Association’s legislative liaison.*
Be a Library Hero

by Carrie Jenott


Relationships.
At such a time as this, libraries are “basking” in the light of high demand. Or perhaps “sweating” is more appropriate, as curtailed funding has created a crisis of reduced capability to meet those demands. The natural result of an inability to meet increased demand is a reduction of overall quality of service and patron experience. Ironically, this is the frustrating opposite to what needs to be done: matching services and resources to meet increased demand.

Businesses react to tough times by stepping up their marketing and outreach efforts without sacrificing quality or service. But what if the money to support sophisticated marketing isn’t there? Small business owners know that they must be advocates in order for their business to survive. Relationships are not just about money. Building relationships takes time, dedication, mutual benefit, involvement, caring concern, and outreach. The truth of the matter is that organizations, as well as people, need relationships.

Advocacy is Everyone’s Business.
The golden opportunity that libraries have right now is to be heroes. Permit me, if you will, to describe a paradigm shift to see libraries in terms of relationships.

It’s more than just a job. For library employees, supporting the library is more than the nine to five. It is a lifestyle. It is your theme song. Providing quality service to the best of your ability—whatever your budget—will create long-term relationships with patrons who will not forget how the library affected and influenced their lives.

Service is an effective way to build relationships. This is not a time for the faint of heart—it’s time for you to shine during the storm.

It’s more than just a book sale. For Friends of the Library, building relationships is more than fundraising and supporting your library with programming and equipment. Friends of the Library are in the unique position of being out and about in the community and discovering what the community needs and wants. Through volunteerism, much can be done to inform the public about the resources that the library has to offer. Is this not a time to go to our library directors and managers and ask them, “Do you have any ideas on how we can help promote the library and its resources to the public?” Friends can help to identify and to do outreach to underserved populations. People who are looking for a “hand up” will thank you for the timely resources they found at their library. Your library will thank you for truly being a Friend of the Library.

It’s more than just making “the ask.” For foundations, creating relationships with your donors is fundamental to an ongoing rapport and being able to rely on others in hard times as well as enjoy the benefits and results of your combined efforts. As the cheerleaders of the Library, the fundraising campaigns and donor relations help spread the word about libraries. More than ever before, foundations need to be sensitive to the needs of the public, assisting in the careful allocation of funds to the highest possible impacting programs. Perhaps I’m preaching to the choir.

It’s more than just a free bookstore. As patrons, do we not owe it to our libraries to spread the word to others? To volunteer when needed? To vote according to our values? To give as well as to take? How better for us to show our appreciation than to support our libraries in their time of need? Show us how we can help, in ways that not only make a difference to our library, but also are achievable in the midst of our own struggles. Make it easy for us and give us a variety of ways to support our libraries that reflect our diverse opportunities and abilities. Not everyone can take the time to volunteer, but anyone can contact government representatives and let them know our minds.

It’s more than just a political tool. Supporting libraries is not a pin to put on your lapel—as political representatives and officials, you have the duty to protect the needs and interests of your constituents, and there is no debate that the people benefit from free

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Carrie Jenott is director of development at Once Sold Tales. She presented “Fundraising 2.0” at the WLFFTA Breakfast at the WLA annual conference.

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and equal access to information for the betterment of their lives. Education is how we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Libraries are a resource to improve our circumstances, to broaden our minds, as well as to be entertained. Knowledge challenges us, grows us, enriches us, and enables us. No other public service can compare to the multifaceted resources that a library offers the people. And it is where your people are. Go there.

Go Where the People Are.
At the time of this writing, over 200 million people use Facebook and over 250 million use MySpace. Statistics show that people are online and more accessible than ever before. Using Web 2.0 resources and friendraising principles is just one of many ways to connect with the public without creating budget requests.

Creative and innovative resources are available to us, diverse in their effectiveness, potential, and cost. Relationships themselves are not free—they cost us our time, some of our lives, and some of our hearts. These relationships will become a part of us and a part of our libraries.

It isn’t a case of “if you build it, they will come.” You need to go where the people are, learn about what their information needs are, and suggest that the library is there for the purpose of meeting those needs. Why else would it exist? Do libraries not collect, rotate, catalogue, evaluate, recommend, and do it all over again—for people? The library belongs to everyone. Everyone should advocate for the library, even and especially in the tough times.

Be a Library Hero.
What will the end result of these relationships be? Community. I guarantee your service will improve, even if your budget does not because, with care and concern, your lives will improve. You can’t help it. And I propose that your budgets will also improve. Your relationships will cause people to realize the benefits they’ve received from their libraries. You’ve created lasting value for them, beyond the books, and more substantial than the stacks. It’s not just the information; it is the human element. You’ve given them a relationship. You’ve met their needs, and they will reciprocate by meeting yours.

Take the time for relationships. The payoff may not be easily measured or immediate. But by being a library hero, you are being and creating library advocates for life.
"Have him come back and play basketball with us!": Sherman Alexie Visits Whatcom County

by Linda Lambert

Presenters at the June 2008 One Book training session warned us that choosing an author “was the perfect opportunity for a fight.” As soon as we (representatives from Whatcom County Library System, Whatcom Community College, and our partners, Bellingham Public Library, Bellingham Technical College and Village Books) were notified that we’d received two One Book grants, we had a flurry of activity and meetings. Who would our author be? Who might relate well to all generations and a diversity of cultures? Who could enthuse people about reading? What book would appeal to a large number of people in our community, especially teens?

We had lively discussion at our meetings, but no fighting. For one thing, Village Book owners Chuck and Dee Robinson were our partners. They have brought hundreds of authors to Village Books in their 25 years in business and had a plentitude of excellent suggestions.

At one of our early meetings, WCLS director Joan Airoldi shared an article that quickened our decision-making about which author and which book would be best for our inaugural attempt at a community wide book club. She circulated the article “Every Teen’s Struggle,” in which Sherman Alexie said that there were teachers, librarians, writers, and parents who knew a secret: “[T]here is one great book for each of us. And that book, whether it is a novel, poetry, history or even an auto repair manual, becomes a sacred and profane how-to manual. So I write because I know there is a kid out there who needs my book. There might be one thousand, one hundred thousand or one million such kids. I want to be their favorite writer, craziest ally and honored guest” (p. 160).

Sherman Alexie became our honored guest for three days in March 2009, and our feedback tells us that he also became a favorite writer and possibly even a craziest ally.

Setting the Stage
We prepared the community for Alexie’s visit through a variety of programs and activities including:

- Book clubs meetings
- Screenings of The Business of Fancy Dancing and Smoke Signals
- A lecture, “Native American Identity: Can We Really Be Part-time?” by Cheryl Crazy Bull, president of Northwest Indian College
- A presentation by Ellen Forney, cartoonist/illustrator for The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian
- A screening of American Carver, a documentary about totem poles
- Musical presentation by violin virtuoso Swil Kanim

In addition to programming, we produced, bookmarks, buttons, banners, bus signs, stickers for coffee cups and posters. Jeanne Brous-sad, a graphics arts instructor at Western and Whatcom Community College, designed the logo. At Whatcom Community College, we created posters of individuals and groups (our college president, an extended family of eleven plus dog, a veteran, a student government office) reading The Absolutely True Diary of A Part-Time Indian. Local television featured Dec Robinson, and the Bellingham Herald and Cascadia Weekly included feature stories.

We launched a Read and Release program, sending 400 books into the wild, strategically placed in coffee shops, laundromats, grocery stories, campus cafeterias, and as many creative venues as we could find. The idea was for the finder to read the book, register their impressions at www.bookcrossing.com and then release it for the next lucky reader to discover.

The mayor and county executive spoke at our two major public events, and support came from many sectors of the community. Besides the bookstore and libraries already mentioned, sponsors included Barnes and Noble, Bellingham Public Schools, Fairhaven Village Inn, Cascadia Weekly, Open Acess Network Services, Whatcom Sound, and the Whatcom County Library Foundation.

Connecting with Kids
Wherever he went in Whatcom County, Alexie was willing to strike silly poses as well as conduct serious conversations. He spoke twice to college and high school students at Western Washington University and had dinner with members of the Whatcom Reads! committee. He participated in a KISM radio phone interview and in an online chat produced by Bellingham Technical College.

At Mt. Baker High School, he spoke to students and community members from Mt. Baker and Nooksack, after which he traveled to the Lummi Nation School. Librarian Valerie McBeath noted that when “really little kids came to him, he got down on his knees to be at eye level when he talked with them.” She felt that it demonstrated his williness to connect very personally with whomever he came in contact. Here are some comments from students:

Dana: “I liked how Sherman Alexie had...a sense of humor even though he had hard things happen to him.”

Crystal: “[The Absolutely True Diary] is a book for those who have no idea, and for those who know all too well, what it is like to grow up poor and helpless.”

Christian: “I thought it was a hilarious book with a valid point to make about following your dreams.”

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Alexie talked with young people at the Whatcom County Juvenile Detention School. A teacher at the Detention School said, “The students have been buzzing ever since, and it’s nice that we can remind them that he said violence is not the answer. We now say, ‘What would Sherm-dog think of that?’ and it brings another honored voice into the equation. I asked them ... what comments they would like me to pass on and the one thing they said was, ‘Have him come back and play basketball with us!’ ”

Alexie attended a dinner, A Conversation with Sherman, with students chosen from every high school in the county. His picture was taken with each student, and he autographed each photograph.

**Having an Impact**
Alexie reached a variety of people. One of them was a homeless woman at one of the two major public events at Whatcom Community College. She did not have a book for him to autograph and asked Christine Perkins, assistant director at BPL and a volunteer identified by a yellow WhatcomReads! shirt, if she thought it was okay to stand in line. Of course.

Christine heard the woman tell Alexie that she’d been homeless for a while and was really moved by what he’d said about poverty. Would he sign a piece of paper? Right then, the woman next to her in line tapped her on the shoulder and said, “I have other books at home. This one is for you.” When the homeless woman protested, Sherman said, “Take the book.”

“I have an image in my mind,” Christine says, “of a homeless woman clutching her very own signed copy of The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, and of the second woman with a warm memory of a good deed.”

Though the WhatcomReads Committee has been diligent in collecting feedback from our audiences, we’ve not instituted any systematic naval-gazing. The above story, and other feedback from the evaluation forms collected at most events, are posted at www.whatcomreads.org, a Web site built and maintained by a librarian at Western Washington University.

In the middle of all our One Book activities, we applied for and received a Big Read grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Bellingham Public Library will take the lead on this one, and by the time this issue of the Alki comes out, we will be able to announce our book and author: Our School by Tobias Wolf. He will be coming to the Fourth Corner in February 2010. ☛

**Reference**
Alexie, Sherman. “Every Teen’s Struggle.” Publisher’s Weekly, February 18, 2008.
The Everett Public Library was honored to receive two prestigious local history awards this spring. In May, the library’s podcast team—Kara Fox, David Dilgard, Cameron Johnson, and Melinda Van Wingen—received the State Historic Preservation Officer’s award for outstanding achievement in historic preservation education. The Evergreen Cemetery Interpretive Tour (www.epls.org/podcast) was the first podcast to receive this honor from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

In June, the Washington State Historical Society bestowed its highest award—The Robert Gray Medal—on the Everett Public Library’s local history specialists, Margaret Riddle and David Dilgard. This medal recognizes distinguished and long-term contributions to Pacific Northwest history. Margaret’s and David’s names are synonymous with local history in Snohomish County. They have provided over 30 years of outstanding service through the library’s Northwest Room. The library is proud to have their contributions to local history recognized at the state level.


On June 1 Debra Park began a new position as the Adult Collection Development Librarian for Spokane County Library District. She has worked for Spokane Public Library since April 2006 as A-V Collection Development Librarian.

Jonathan Betz-Zall has been promoting the Highline Community College Library’s impact and influence by showing that librarians can be scholars, too. He has presented twice for the college’s Science Seminar series (http://flightline.highline.edu/scienceseminars/08Spring/index.html) and once for the History Seminar series (http://www.highline.edu/ia/cam/N/NRs/08-09_NR/HCC%27s_History_Seminar_032309.htm).

Andrew Poultridge has received a travel award from University of Washington to attend the annual conference of the Special Library Association in Washington, D.C. Andrew works at the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Rick Newell, senior training and support coordinator at OCLC, has earned the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance™ (CPLP) credential from the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) Certification Institute. Earning the CPLP™ credential means Rick Newell possesses the knowledge and skills to be a top performer in the workplace learning and performance field.

Project Manager Deanna Sukkar has completed a fourteen-month long Multilingual Web Expansion for the Seattle Public Library to improve online services for immigrants and refugees. Funded by a grant from the Friends of The Seattle Public Library (SPL), this project makes SPL information available on the library’s Web site in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Amharic, and Somali. Included in the expansion is a “Welcome to the Library” video in the six languages. The multifaceted project required generating “culturally neutral” English content to promote clarity and consistency and involved working with interdepartmental Library staff, freelance language editors and an outside translation agency. For more information about the project, contact Deanna Sukkar at dsukkar@u.washington.edu.

In Memorium Michael Patrick Lynch

Michael Patrick Lynch, 71, of Wenatchee, died Saturday, Jan. 3, 2009, at University of Washington Hospital in Seattle. Mike grew up and received his schooling in the rural California. In 1959, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in English literature from the University of San Francisco. He served for three years in the U.S. Army, mainly in Japan. Through his military experiences, Mike became acquainted with programs in Japan, that extended library resources from urban to rural areas, the origin of his long-term commitment to rural library service. In 1963, Mike received a Master’s degree in library science from the University of Denver. His first professional job was with the Puget Sound Regional Library in Olympia.

In 1965, he accepted the position of assistant director of the newly formed North Central Regional Library. Headquartered in Wenatchee, he coordinated library services between the 23 branches in Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant and Okanogan Counties—the largest library district in the area in the contiguous U.S.—and introduced mail order library services throughout the rural areas of those counties. He was appointed as director of NCRL in 1968, after the retirement of Jo Pardee Hallauer. During his years as director, Mike replaced bookmobiles with mail-order library services and, at the same time, expanded the services of branch libraries. North Central was one of the first library systems in the country to offer audio/video media throughout its service area.

During his last several years as director, Mike was heavily involved legislatively, working successfully to obligate a percentage of state property tax revenue specifically to libraries in order to guarantee their continued support long term. In 1970, Mike married Carol Anderson and was her loving friend and supportive partner for 39 years, in a continuous stream of adventures. They made their home by the Wenatchee River in Leavenworth, where they welcomed and raised their daughters, Kieran and Caitlin.

Mike had an inquisitive and probing mind, a wonderful off-the-wall sense of humor, an inborn appreciation for the world around him and an actively caring spirit. He was a member of the Washington State Library Association, the American Library Association and the Leavenworth Rotary Club, where he was named as a Paul Harris fellow.

A private family mass to celebrate Mike’s life has been held. Those who wish may donate in his name to Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, referencing the Sarcoma Clinic, P.O. Box 19023, Seattle, WA 98109 or to the Wenatchee High School Mariachi Program, c/o Ramon Rivera, 1101 Millerdale Street, Wenatchee, WA 98801.
Meet Dana Murphy-Love

By Tim Mallory

WLA was incredibly fortunate to have Gail Willis serve as association coordinator for such a long time. As an association, while membership and officers changed constantly, Gail was the anchor in the continuous current of change. We’re relearning what change is like as we move into our second year of association management by the firm Melby, Cameron & Anderson (MCA). We now have a constant office, phone, mail, and business contact through the firm, but we are learning that the stream of personnel changes in the rest of our professional lives affects our association, too.

The newest personnel change is our executive director. Dana Murphy-Love, one of the principal partners in MCA, has taken over from Kristin Crowe. To MCA’s credit, this change occurred in response to their survey of our needs and how they were met during the first year of our contract. All of the partners in MCA were involved in the evaluation, and they looked seriously to see who among their staff would be the best match for WLA. From this process, it was decided that we would be best served to have an MCA partner serve as the WLA executive director.

A first round of meetings between Dana, the incoming WLA officers, and committees with plans under way, has already taken place. Dana is heavily involved in seeing to the success of the WALE conference in 2009 and the joint WLA/PNLA conference in 2010. Office and membership functions for WLA continue to be handled by Judy Cookson, who took over from Tara Johnson in another personnel change last fall. Many of you have met Judy by phone, and in person at the conference registration booth in Spokane. Dana and Judy work closely together to manage the WLA business, with the help of financial, technology, and graphics assistance from other MCA staff at the WLA office in Edmonds. Although no one can be Gail as she served for so many years, MCA is providing a solid and consistent anchor for our association and acting as the constant we need even with personnel changes.

To get to know Dana better, here is her bio from the MCA Web site http://www.mcamgmt.com/staff_mch.htm:

Dana Murphy-Love, CAE, is a graduate of Ferris State University in Michigan with degrees in court reporting and office administration, and she earned her Certified Association Executive credential from the American Society of Association Executives in 1993. With over 24 years in general association management, Murphy-Love has specialized experience in association meeting management, tradeshow administration, continuing professional education program development, and professional certification. Prior to becoming a partner, Dana served as an executive with the International Association of Exhibition Management and was CEO of the IAEM Foundation. She was named Association Executive of the Year by the Washington Society of Association Executives in 2004.

Meet Dana Murphy-Love

By Tim Mallory

Oct. 1-2, 2009
The Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel and Wenatchee Convention Center

The WALE 2009 conference committee is hard at work putting together a great conference. Keynote speaker will be Jim Lynch, author of Highest Tide, and Brothers from Other Mothers will close out the Friday night dinner. A preconference will be held on September 30 at the Wenatchee Library Service Center (one block from the conference site).

For more information, contact Sue Seigerman (2009 Conference Chair) sseigerman@scll.org 509-893-8350, or Georgette Rogers (2009 WALE Chair) grogers@libertylakewa.gov 509-232-2510.
Merit Award: Outstanding Performance
Clancy Pool, St. John Library Branch Manager

Nominated by Kristie Kirkpatrick
Clancy began as a manager of a small, rundown storefront branch in 1992, servicing a town of 525 people. With barely enough space for both children and adults at any given time, Clancy needed a miracle. Clancy worked hard for that miracle with incredible outreach. Soon the library was bursting at the seams, and she began lobbying for a new one. In fall 2005, the town of St. John passed a bond election for a new library/city hall by a margin of eighty percent. “Clancy regularly offers a multitude of services that make St. John the jewel in the Whitman County Library crown. We don’t giggle anymore when Clancy calls herself the queen in St. John—in fact, we take a little bow.”

Trustee Award #2
Jerry Franklin King,
Ft. Vancouver Regional Library

Nominated by Bruce Ziegman
Last year, we were saddened by the death of outstanding Board member, Jerry Franklin King, who served as a Ft. Vancouver Regional Library District Trustee from March 1997 until his death on Nov. 26, 2008. As we reflect upon his years of service and the support he so quietly provided, we are struck by the enormity of his gift and his legacy to our library district. The award was presented to his son, Quentin King, in memory of the great service Jerry provided to the Ft. Vancouver communities.

Friends/Foundation Award #1
Coupeville Library Board & Vote Yes Twice Coupeville Library! Committee

Nominated by Leslie Franzen
Two groups have worked closely of behalf of the Coupeville Library Board and the Vote Yes Twice Coupeville Library! Committee. In January 2008, the Vote Yes Twice Coupeville Library! Committee was formed, beginning an eight-month journey to educate the Central Whidbey community on the need for a larger library through a huge grassroots campaign. Both the LCFA formation and the bond measures were approved in August 2008. In these tough economic times, Central Whidbey’s unique ability to rise to the challenge, and through a vote of the community, shows us how much they value the services of the Sno-Isle Libraries in Coupeville.
Friends/Foundation Award #2
Friends of the Battle Ground Library
Nominated by Bruce Ziegman
No group of citizens has fought longer or harder for a new library than has the Friends of the Battle Ground Community Library. They’ve kept their dream alive for more than two decades of failed bond elections and extensive grassroots fundraising, and on May 30, 2009, this dream came to fruition with the grand opening of the new library. This award is for their many years of dedicated support and for believing so strongly in the benefits a larger library brings in literacy and enjoyment to their community.

WALE Outstanding Employee of the Year Award
Lisa Adams, Richland Public Library
Nominated by Sally O’Neal
Lisa has been an active member of WLA and WALE for thirteen years, chairing WALE in 1999-2000. Her efforts as Local Arrangements Chair for the 2007 WLA Conference typify her tireless dedication to the state library association. On the local level, Lisa’s official title of library assistant III belies her many key roles within the library and the community. She is one of those rare individuals who is both an idea-generating leader and a diligent follow-through worker. It is with pride that the Richland Library Board nominates Lisa Adams, a great asset to our library, our community, and our state, for this distinguished award.

WLA President’s Award
Mary Ross, WLA Continuing Education Coordinator
Selected by Martha Parsons
WLA President Martha Parsons chose Mary Ross to receive the President’s Award this year. Mary has retired from her library job, but she has continued her work in libraries as a consultant and trainer to libraries and library staff. She has stayed involved in WLA and is currently on the WLA Board as the Coordinator of Continuing Education and is an active member of the WALT Interest Group. She serves on the Board of the ALA Continuing Library Education Network & Exchange Round Table and was a delegate to ALA’s 2nd & 3rd Congresses on Professional Education. She has designed online training programs for virtual reference providers, as well as courses for Webjunction and LibraryU. She co-authored the book Virtual Reference Training: The Complete Guide to Providing Anytime, Anywhere Answers, published by ALA Editions in 2004. Mary is always thoughtful, positive, and willing to think outside the box. Mary’s contributions to libraries, both in Washington State and on a national level, are immeasurable.

WLA Annual Conference Grant Winners
Grace Fitzgerald
Erin Gordon
Susan James
Annie Lewis
Susan Veltfort

ALKI • July 2009
Susan James is the 2009 recipient of the $6,000 Maryann E. Reynolds Scholarship. Although tempted by the fame and big money associated with being a librarian, Susan James’s real draw to the profession is her belief that connecting people to information through excellent service can transform their lives . . . and what could be better in a career? Her evident passion and enthusiasm for library services and collections, as well as her understanding of issues facing the profession, impressed the Scholarship Committee.

Susan’s journey to the MLIS has been challenging. A serious automobile accident involving a lengthy recovery prompted her to rethink her goals, and determination, dedication, humor, and a strong spirit contributed to the successful completion of an Associates in Art degree from Lower Columbia College, a Bachelor of Arts in English (Magna cum laude) from WSU Vancouver, and the current pursuit of her MLIS through Emporia State University’s Oregon program.

Libraries have played a prominent role throughout Susan’s education. She worked as a student aide in the Lower Columbia College Library. Following graduation, she was accepted at Tulane University in New Orleans, and worked as a student in their Rare Books and Special Collections Department. She returned to complete her undergraduate education at WSU Vancouver and gained experience as a student in Circulation. Susan is currently an Archive and Library Paraprofessional in the library at Lower Columbia College. Her job is varied: circulation desk management, materials processing, interlibrary loans, and library liaison to the Humanities and Languages and Literature Departments. She also serves on three committees.

Displaying initiative and leadership, important characteristics in our ever-changing profession, Susan recently submitted a successful proposal to establish the first official archive in the Lower Columbia College Library. She now directs this fledgling program, and she is busily establishing relationships with archivists, attending workshops, and joining professional organizations. She is also in training to digitize the archives collection, which is expected to be online later in the summer.

Susan notes that she spends “each day looking for new opportunities and information to ensure the archive’s success.” Not only does Susan seek ways to enhance services to users of the library, she is a firm believer in giving back to her community through participation in volunteer programs such as Books for Kids and Borders Angel Tree Book Program. As if working, attending graduate school, and volunteering weren’t enough, she is writing a proposal for a book about rare book theft and archive security. She will complete her MLIS in August, 2010. Susan’s strong record of involvement bodes well for WLA, and we look forward to her continuing contributions to the association.

Commentary by Susan James

In tough economic times civic budget cuts must be made and, inevitably it seems, our public libraries often receive the first, deepest cuts. In the Daily News “Thumbs” section (Oct. 25), it was suggested that eliminated library staff could be replaced with community members who would “enjoy volunteering time in the library.” This comment makes it unmistakably clear how frequently the responsibilities of professional librarians may be misunderstood or undervalued.

Mention the title “librarian” and some people still conjure up stereotypical images and outdated ideas. If only they would look again, they’d discover that today’s librarians are vibrant information professionals who spend years acquiring skills to better serve the public in new and increasingly innovative ways.

Establishing the Value of Our Librarians

Commentary by Susan James

In tough economic times civic budget cuts must be made and, inevitably it seems, our public libraries often receive the first, deepest cuts. In the Daily News “Thumbs” section (Oct. 25), it was suggested that eliminated library staff could be replaced with community members who would “enjoy volunteering time in the library.” This comment makes it unmistakably clear how frequently the responsibilities of professional librarians may be misunderstood or undervalued.

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Continued on next page
Professional librarians hold master’s degrees in library and information science (MLIS). Graduate courses cover a wide range of study, including everything from online reference systems and Internet search methods, to automated circulation systems and the selection and processing of materials. Librarians must be experts in research methods and strategies, classification, cataloguing, indexing, and additionally, computer-related course work is an increasingly important part of an MLIS degree.

Librarians participate in continuing education and training to stay up to date with new information systems. They must be fluent in the latest technology to help patrons find specific information and use it effectively, especially with today’s digital overload. In their various roles, Librarians may acquire, prepare, and classify materials; negotiate contracts for services, materials, and equipment; perform public-relations and fundraising duties; prepare budgets; coordinate programs; conduct classes; and constantly direct activities to ensure everything runs smoothly.

These are just some of the responsibilities of trained information professionals. While every library cherishes and values the community members who give so willingly of themselves, suggesting these volunteers also take on the duties of a librarian (or a staff member who may be a librarian-in-training) is simply asking too much, and does a disservice to all.

In a recent study, Americans gave their libraries an excellent report more often than any other community service. The majority believe their local librarians use public money appropriately and carefully, and state that if libraries were shut down due to budget cutbacks, "something essential and important" would be lost to the entire community. It’s vital that we understand this essential “something” they are speaking of isn’t the library building or the materials: it is the help given to us by librarians, who are the very heart and engine driving these dynamic information services.

Librarians are the key to lifelong learning, from pre-school storytimes and summer reading programs, to providing information and services for the retired and elderly members of our community. Statistics prove that involved librarians have a discernible positive impact on student achievement, and they provide essential information about health, economics, job opportunities, the environment, housing, and countless other areas to support better living conditions and to help people lead productive and fulfilling lives. Librarians work hard for, and need, their community’s continued support.

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*Continued from previous page*

*Susan James works at Lower Columbia College Library.*
Answers about Continuing Education (CE) Grant
by Mary Ross and Jennifer Fenton

The changes to funding guidelines for the Washington State Library’s Continuing Education (CE) matching grants prompted many questions and comments from library directors. We want to share with you some of those comments and questions, along with responses from WLA’s CE Task Force.

More information about the CE matching grants may be found on the WSL Web page at http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/libraries/training/continuEd.aspx.

Comment: “We truly will be unable to send staff members to trainings. This is a HUGE loss to our professional development and of course, to the service of our patrons.”

CE Task Force Response: If your library has been using CE matching grants primarily to send employees to general conferences like WLA and WALE, then it does seem that your CE has been eliminated. There are still CE grants available from the Washington State Library (WSL). The CE must fit in with the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) priorities. Unfortunately, general conference attendance can no longer be funded by these CE grants.

Comment: “I have had a hard time communicating how conference attendance does not meet LSTA goals.”

CE Task Force Response: The Task Force members also struggle with this. When we asked WSL staff about this, they replied, “General conference attendance does not meet LSTA goals because it goes beyond the scope of the LSTA priorities and offers workshops on non-LSTA priority topics in addition to LSTA priority topics. Since there is no guarantee that a participant will attend only LSTA approved programs, general conference attendance is no longer supported by CE Grants.”

Comment: “For small, rural libraries with limited training budgets, it really makes it hard to lose the CE funding and isolates us even more.”

CE Task Force Response: Yes, we agree that this situation is very difficult for libraries with limited training budgets, especially for small libraries without their own in-house training resources. According to WSL, funding for CE grants has increased over the past several years and the amount of CE grants awarded has exceeded allocated funds.

Comment: “It is a shortsighted decision that basically eliminates attendance for support staff at meetings.”

CE Task Force Response: Support staff are still eligible for CE Grants that fit the criteria. Meeting attendance is not considered continuing education.

Comment: “Most libraries don’t have as much money as they need to provide the training opportunities needed in a time of fast technology changes. The ability to use WSL CE grants to leverage local funds was a valuable service—to libraries, to staff, and to our end users.”

Continued on next page.

Mary Ross and Jennifer Fenton are the continuing education coordinators for the Washington Library Association and the Washington State Library, respectively.

Thank You to all of our Washington Library Partners

- Everett Public Library
- King County Library System
- Kitsap Regional Library
- Libraries of Stevens County
- Microsoft Corporation
- Mid-Columbia Library System
- North Central Regional Library
- Northwest Washington Digital Library Consortium (9 members)
- Pierce County Library System
- Richland Public Library
- Seattle Public Library
- Sno-Isle Libraries
- Spokane County Library District
- Tacoma Public Library
- Timberland Regional Library

Your digital download partner OverDrive
The leading download service for libraries and schools
www.overdrive.com
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CE Task Force Response: Libraries can still receive matching grants from the Washington State Library. Only the criteria have changed, not the amount of the grant awards. One suggestion from the CE Task Force is that library directors may want to make shifts in library budgets to take advantage of the available CE Grants, while funding CE that doesn’t meet the LSTA priorities out of their own budgets.

Comment: “We’ve seen a significant reduction in conference attendance, especially at WLA, WALE, and Internet Librarian.”

CE Task Force Response: Internet Librarian is an example of a specialized conference that meets the LSTA priorities because it deals with technology and has a direct benefit to the end user. WSL has funded several library employees to attend Internet Librarian under the new LSTA guidelines.

Comment: “The new LSTA guidelines seem heavy on electronic services, but seem to leave out much of our core values - like reader’s advisory.”

CE Task Force Response: Reader’s advisory can be considered part of lifelong learning, serving diverse and/or underserved populations and access to information for customers and is therefore an acceptable topic for CE grant applications as long as the specific reader’s advisory training fits in with one or more of the LSTA priorities and has a direct benefit to the end user. Besides technology and electronic services, many core library services fit the LSTA priorities including outreach, services to ESL patrons, literacy for children, teens, adults and family and summer reading programs.

Comment: “I find that the priority of not funding CE ’that does not lead to the development or delivery of programs and services for the end user’ to be specious—what CE would any library authorize that does not do that?”

CE Task Force Response: WSL staff responded that: “WSL is following the direction of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the federal agency that administers LSTA. Improper awarding of CE grants could result in the Washington State Library being required to reimburse the federal government through the use of general state funds. We cannot afford to do this nor do we wish to go against federal law. Further, we do not wish to put our ability to receive and administer LSTA funds in jeopardy.”

Comment: “Apparently, other states have not been affected like this.”

CE Task Force Response: Work done by Jennifer Fenton and Mary Ross indicates that many states are struggling with the same issues as Washington. Some states fund CE out of state funds so they are not tied to the LSTA priorities. Washington funds CE out of federal funds and does not have state funds to replace federal funds. Nevada, Idaho, and Arizona are examples of states that have been impacted by the new LSTA guidelines.

Comment: “I am disappointed, because training of library employees and boards is an important means by which state libraries can support library services to the public.”

State Library Response: “WSL is dedicated to supporting the training of library employees and boards. The CE/Training Coordinator is available as a resource. WebJunction Washington is a service available to all employees and trustees, offering free online courses specifically for trustees, as well as library employees. There will be limited general state funds to allow some direct work with boards of trustees. WSL will convene a WILL task force in 2009 to investigate new funding and implementation models for this important training of trustees.”

“Déjà vu All Over Again”:

A Trustee’s Take on Productivity in Hard Times

by Alec McKay

The sky is falling, the sky is falling, tax receipts are falling! A penny saved is a penny earned... A stitch in time saves..... Enough platitudes? How do we deal with the changing realities of funding libraries and other public services? As government revenues remain static or shrink, there is increasing competition for the few dollars available. How do library systems stake their claim on an adequate level of funding? We have to remember that everyone feels that THEIR program is essential and should not be cut. Under the new reality, with a limited pie to share, if one program/group gains, somebody else is going to lose. The key question is how we will decide to cut up the pie.

Using the concept of “productivity” is one way to look at the process of allocating resources. In the industrial sector, the concept has been around for decades and usually concentrates on the greatest output for the lowest cost or cost per unit. In a service area, determining the productivity of an organization is less straightforward. For services the concept of productivity involves two areas: efficiency and effectiveness.

Efficiency has traditionally been the stronghold of the accountants, who look at what it costs to do a job or deliver a program. Efficient service organizations minimize the cost of delivering their services. Effectiveness is a little more complex, requiring us to determine how well we are doing the job, and key to this is the determination of valid “outcome” measures. Such measures address the desired goals or results of a program or activity. For example, training is an important part of an organization. The goal of a training program is about the results (e.g., the ability to use a checkout system or to find information in government documents), not that the training was given.

For productivity to be useful, efficiency and effectiveness must be balanced with each other. Libraries could drive the cost of delivering a service to a very “efficient” level, but if patrons can’t get the materials they want or don’t get them in a timely manner, then the service isn’t very effective. On the other hand, we could provide whatever people want almost instantly and be very effective, but the costs could be so high that other services would have to be cut.

Alec McKay is a trustee for North Central Regional Library system.
in length. When using e-mail, put the action part of the message at the top. When you talk by phone, make sure your “ask” is restated a few times during the course of the conversation.

In urgent situations, multiple contacts are better. Write a letter, and then send an e-mail referencing the letter. After that, make a phone call to confirm receipt of the letter. Then, when a few days have passed, follow up with an e-mail or call to ask politely about the legislator’s decision to support your issue. If it doesn’t go well, or you don’t receive the answer you had hoped for, let it go. You gain nothing by becoming argumentative or combative. The rule here is, “Never motivate your opposition.” Regardless of whether or not the situation goes your way, it’s always important to show your appreciation. If they support your position, thank them for doing so—if they go against you, thank them for listening. Thank-yous are best delivered by letter or note; many people perceive e-mailed thank-yous as insincere.

Try It—You’ll Like It
Many people are apprehensive about contacting elected officials. They shouldn’t be. Elected officials, by their very nature are people-people. They are social characters. They expect to hear from the public on issues they are facing and appreciate the input.

You will not only be making a difference via your advocacy—you may also enjoy the experience. The more you do it, the more effective you will become.

2009 State Legislative Session
by Michael Wirt

Sunday, April 26 was the final day of the Legislative session, one whose eventual focus was filling the forecast $9 billion state revenue shortfall but that also saw the introduction of 2576 bills along the way, most of them unrelated to the budget.

Fortunately (in one respect), there’s never been state funding for public libraries so there’s nothing to cut. Unfortunately, K-12, community college, and four-year college libraries, as well as the Washington State Library, will feel the impact as their parent agencies internally allocate state funding cuts.

WLA’s Legislative Planning Committee 2009 lobbying efforts targeted legislation directly relating to libraries, this year none of it in a defensive mode. While property tax reduction bills that would adversely impact city and district library budgets were introduced, none made it out of committee. Likewise, legislation that would include library materials in a broad “harmful to minors” statute didn’t get a committee hearing.

Tracking was broad and included bills that might affect local and state governments in general, and by default libraries that are part of those governments. Because of the magnitude of the budget deficit and the minimal influence WLA’s efforts might have, budget lobbying wasn’t a priority during this past session.

Several bills signed by the Governor have specific library application.
• SHB 1291 increases the population cap for cities annexing to library districts to 300,000. This bill was introduced at the request of the City of Renton and was supported by King County Library System.
• ESSB 5355 allows an initial levy rate to be included in ballot titles when establishing a new library district. Introduced to facilitate the formation of new library districts in the few remaining unserved counties, it targeted Skagit County.
• ESHB 2075 clarifies application of sales and use taxes to digital goods and products. A WLA-prompted amendment provides an exemption for licensed online databases.
• ESHB 2261 is a comprehensive restructuring of basic education that includes, thanks to the “Spokane Moms” and their supporters, a requirement for teacher-librarians in all K-12 schools. Due to fiscal constraints, however, changes are to be phased in over a multi-year period.

Some other bills more generally affect Washington’s governments, their employees, and their retirees.
• ESHB 1018 eliminated the March special election date beginning next year and the May date after 2011, leaving only February and April for early-year local ballot proposals, such as tax levies and bond issues.
• SB 5315 extends the survivor annuity option for preretirement death in Plan 1 of the Public Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) to members who die after leaving active service.
• Another PERS bill, SB 6161, reduces employer contribution rates by almost 35% from July 2009 through June 2011 and the Plan 2 employee rate by 16%.

This being the first of two sessions of the 61st Legislature, every bill that was introduced comes back to life next year, to be joined by many hundreds of new ones. Also back for more discussion will be the biennial budget: the annual reality check on the first year’s estimates and a supplemental budget to deal with any resulting issues.

Legislative Planning Committee activities will resume this fall with planning and legislative priority recommendations for the 2010 session.

“Because of the magnitude of the budget deficit and the minimal influence WLA’s efforts might have, budget lobbying wasn’t a priority during this past session.”

Michael Wirt co-chairs the WLA Legislative Planning Committee. He is director of Spokane County Library District.
I’ve been reading Ray Bradbury again, for the first time in far too long. Bradbury is so much a part of the literary firmament it is easy to take him for granted. Three generations have not merely known him, but grown up with him. His first self-published fanzine stories appeared back to the 1930’s, and by the 1940’s he was a familiar byline in magazines ranging from Dime Mystery and Thrilling Wonder Stories to Mademoiselle and The Saturday Evening Post. As a pulp fiction fan, it has always delighted me that The Martian Chronicles and The Illustrated Man have become such mainstays of school curricula, given that they see with stories from the sorts of magazines that teachers would typically confiscate. (As a kid, I first encountered Fahrenheit 451 in an old Playboy, though I confess I didn’t actually get around to reading it until years later).

Bradbury loved the pulps in his youth, and he has never really given them up, always ready to leap to the weirdest images and wildest improbabilities at the drop of a hat—a of a sideshow barker’s straw boater, to be precise. He has that signature way of juxtaposing the most extravagant effects—a homicidal newborn baby, a soda fountain on Mars—with those big ideas of his. Take an image like the doomed astronauts in Kaleidoscope, flung into space and towards various yet certain deaths, connected as disembodied voices in the void by a thinning strand of radio waves. Bradbury never has to say, “We all die alone,” or “We live through our connections with others.” The unforgettable image of those human shooting stars burns itself into the reader’s consciousness with all the power of myth.

He’s also a great suspense writer. I love his darker stories, such as “The Screaming Woman,” in which a young girl tries desperately to get somebody to believe her tale about the muffled screams she hears coming from somewhere under her backyard, or “The Town Where No One Got Off,” in which a travelling salesman decides on a whim to get off a train in the American heartland, only to find a heart of darkness lurking there. I’ve read both of these in my story-time for grown-ups at the downtown Seattle library, and the stories needed no help from me to galvanize the crowd.

I’d Rather Be Reading

Brother Ray
by David Wright

Of course librarians love Bradbury—he’s practically one of us. We recognize in Ray that latchkey kid, content to while away hours of a summer afternoon in the library, reading and drawing pictures that illustrate the fantastic workings of his story-making brain. You might just feel sorry for him if he weren’t so obviously the happiest kid on earth. Ray Bradbury grew up in libraries, and wrote the first version of Fahrenheit 451 in a library basement on a rented typewriter, running up into the stacks to fetch snippets of literature to feed the flames and burn into the memories of his living library.

Fahrenheit 451 is one of the few dystopias that truly scares me, in showing that the dramatic bookburning by jackbooted fascists is merely window dressing, the symptom and logical progression of an apathetic society grown increasingly oblivious to all but the most bland and simplistic images. Far more disturbing than the threat of Big Brother coming to take our books away is the thought that a day may come when people simply lose all interest in reading, distracted by pretty sounds and colors. Bradbury has seen the enemy, and it is us:

“Speed up the film... Digest-digests, digest-digest-digests. Politics? One column, two sentences, a headline! Then, in midair, all vanishes! Whirl man’s mind around about so fast under the pumping hands of publishers, exploiters, broadcasters that the centrifuge flings off all unnecessary, time-wasting thought! ... It didn’t come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God.”

Sound familiar? When Bradbury wrote about people moving through the world with little seashell radios in their ears, deaf to the world around them, it was science fiction. Every time I offer a welcoming library smile and my outstretched attention to yet another iPod person, to be met with a vague obliviousness at best, I’m a character in Bradbury’s nightmare.

Bradbury is turning ninety soon, and he is still cranking out stories. One presumes he cannot live forever, and that his eventual passing will be met with that macabre uptick in sales and circulation. But don’t wait—treat yourself to a return journey to the Bradbury lands today. In addition to being tickled and thrilled, you’ll find yourself inspired by one of librarians’ most eloquent fellow travelers, a man who cares deeply about the celebration and preservation of story, and shares our profession’s journey towards a visionary future in search of our ever-present past.
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