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Up Front

The President Speaks

After serving two years as vice president and president-elect, my term as president has finally begun. It is an honor and a privilege to represent the Washington Library Association in this capacity and I look forward to working with you, the members, over the coming two years. I’d like to thank Carolynn Myall for her many contributions to WLA and its culture during her term as president. I’ve heard praise from many about the positive results of her focus on making the association’s legislative actions more open and transparent to the members. I’d also like to thank her for her openness and willingness to share information along the way that helped ease me into my new role.

“Washington Connects!” the theme of this year’s annual conference was such an appropriate one. A significant WLA role is to facilitate connections between individuals and libraries, and through those connections improve services to our customers. This conference was jam packed full of informative and thought provoking programs, plus some fun networking opportunities, too, such as the opening reception and boat ride on the Hanford Reach. Thank you to the conference planning committee, chaired by Mike Cook, for another great annual conference. I’m constantly amazed at the strengths of our member volunteers who year after year put together two successful professional annual conferences (WLA and Washington Association of Library Employees) that excite and rejuvenate those who attend.

Speaking of volunteers, please join me in welcoming the new WLA board members who began their new two-year terms of office in April:
- Phil Heikkinen – Coordinator of Strategic Planning
- Katie Cargill – Pacific Northwest Library Association Representative
- Elizabeth Iaukea – Interest Group Representative
- Sally Chilson – 2009 Conference Chair

As I write this, we have just concluded our annual board retreat at the Dumas Bay Retreat Centre in Federal Way. This retreat is an important time for board members, committee chairs and interest group chairs to come together to determine the direction the association will take over the next two years and beyond. This year we tried something different and invited Lynn Melby, of Melby, Cameron, and Hull, an association management firm, to facilitate the strategic planning process. I felt the facilitation gave us a new and focused perspective that will serve the association well. Watch the WLA Web site (www.wla.org) for the new strategic plan. We welcome your thoughts and contributions to the efforts to accomplish our goals. If some piece of it catches your interest, please contact me, or any board member, and let us know you’d like to be actively involved in continuing to make WLA “a resource for Washington libraries and the people who make them great!”

Organizationally we have some challenges looming in the coming year. Our long-time association coordinator, Gail Willis, is retiring in the summer of 2008 and it is hard to imagine how we will manage without her! But we are moving forward, whether we like it or not, to make plans for the changes ahead. A transition taskforce, lead by Vice President Tim Mallory, is in place and they have started to identify possible options.

I’d love to hear from you. Let me know what you think is working and what isn’t working in the association. Is there something the organization can do to help you more effectively and efficiently deliver services to your customers? Also, watch for a WLA continuing education assessment survey that will be coming out soon from Mary Ross, our continuing education coordinator, and student intern, Kara Fox. Your feedback will help form WLA’s continuing education efforts.

Martha Parsons

Martha Parsons works at the Washington State University Extension Energy Program in Olympia, and is president of the Washington Library Association. Please send her your ideas for the association at parsonsm@energy.wsu.edu
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On the cover:
The Columbia River around the Tri-Cities of Pasco, Richland and Kennewick.
Photos of the area (like this one) and the WLA Conference were taken by Rose Ferri.
From the Editor

We pulled away from the dock in a drizzle. The ruddy-faced captain gunned the jet-boat engine and for the next three hours we traversed the last free flowing stretch of the Columbia River.

Conferences can all look the same: A cookie-cutter hotel; windowless rooms in a sterile conference center. But the Saturday morning tour of the Hanford National Monument gave a sense of place to the Washington Library Association's Tri-Cities conference in April.

The Hanford Reach is a birdwatcher's dream. We saw pterodactyl-like herons lift off nests the size of tires in a treetop rookery, and the mud swallows' architecture honeycombed the cliffs. White egrets shared the river with loons and a variety of ducks. Deer grazed in the sage and grass along the bank, while a fisherman in a boat braced himself against a bobbing pole. We didn't wait to see the steelhead on his line – the combatants had already been at it for an hour and half.

The monument's history is as rich as its scenery. “Cocooned” nuclear reactors stand like Cold War sentries on the stark landscape. No Trespassing signs aren't needed, notes our guide. Radiation warnings keep visitors off the beaches.

The cover of this issue offers a glimpse of the undeveloped shrub-steppe landscape. *Alki* lucked out in finding Naches-based photographer Rose Ferri a few years ago. She's shot every WLA conference since, but this year's gathering took place against one of her favorite backdrops. Ferri is working on her master's thesis in resource management and has special permission to roam the high-security Hanford site, documenting changes in the landscape over the last sixty years. She generously offered to share her images with *Alki*.

Inside you'll find interviews with Leslie Burger, president of the American Library Association, and Martha Parsons, WLA's new president, plus highlights from sessions on library technology, research and reference. We hope you enjoy this snapshot of a memorable conference.

Correction

Leadership from a New Perspective:
Martha Parsons Assumes Association Presidency

By Karen Jaskar

Martha Parsons, 55, lives in a rural area northeast of Olympia with her dog Teddy and her cat Smokey. Her interests include traveling, especially in Great Britain where she once lived, collecting Welsh love spoons, and shopping for bargains on eBay.

With the ceremonial handing over of the gavel at this spring’s Washington Library Association conference, outgoing president Carolynne Myall passed leadership of the organization to new president Martha Parsons, marking an historic occasion for the association. For the first time, WLA will be headed by a library worker without a master’s in library science, promising a new voice in state library leadership. Assuming this role after years of passionate library advocacy, Parsons shares a vision of a future association more engaged with its members, and more inclusive in its membership.

Drawing upon a library career that began almost twenty years ago as a library technician at a National Aeronautics and Space Administration branch library on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, Parsons arrived at what is now the Washington State University Extension Energy Program Library in Olympia, Washington, in 1992, and has been involved in professional library organizations ever since. Encouraged by her supervisors, Parsons joined the Washington Library Association and became active in the Washington Association of Library Employees, a WLA interest group. Parson’s started out as a conference planner and rose to chair the interest group. As head of the group representing library support staff in Washington state, Parsons addressed the ongoing problem of the professional caste system in libraries, and advocated a more inclusive vision of libraries that embraced the talents of workers on both sides of the master’s degree divide.

Parsons has found the association to be inclusive and able to meet her desire for involvement with ever more challenging roles. Speaking of her status as a “non-librarian librarian,” Parsons addresses the atmosphere she has encountered at WLA: “I do have a strong sense that things are changing and that there are fewer walls between those with an MLS and those without,” she says. “We all have something to contribute, and WLA has been an amazing, welcoming organization.”

Taking on her first WLA position as the association’s nascent webmaster, Parsons soon found herself attending board meetings and encountering various WLA interest groups and committees in support of her new task, while her most recent role as vice president deepened her grasp of the overall organization. Exploring WLA in all its facets allowed for an expansion of a personal leadership style based in the power of listening, building connections and creating space for the accomplishments of others. Parsons sees how these skills will be of service to WLA: “I see the role of president as the one who keeps everybody on track, connecting people, and being the communicator between groups,” she says. “I like to brainstorm and hear other people’s ideas. I know I don’t have all the answers.”

As the symbolic leader for 2,500 libraries and thousands of Washington library workers, See MARTHA on page 30.
Libraries Foster Community:
An interview with a national leader

By Micheal Wood

Introduction
She was articulate, respectful and persuasive. She spoke in the quiet, reasonable way that people speak when they speak the truth. People trust her vision that public libraries are shared places that belong to all people without prejudice, that they are sanctuaries of the values that can sustain democracy. A vision that libraries have the power, the duty and the mandate to provide information resources that transform the communities they serve. Her career in librarianship has shown by example that advocacy of the public interest can bring millions of funding dollars to this profoundly democratic cause. She is Leslie Burger, and the historical record of librarianship in the United States will show that in the period from July 2006 through June 2007, she did all she could to lead our national association to engage this turbulent new century.

In April, the fast growing city of Kennewick was host to our annual congress of Washington Library Association leaders. Burger, president of the American Library Association, was an honored guest. She seemed refreshed and energized by the long flight from New Jersey, where she serves as director of the Princeton Public Library. This transcript, excerpted from Alki’s short interview with Burger in the Presidents Suite of the Renaissance Hilton, may in format be the usual boilerplate – but Burger’s unselfconscious commitment to our common goals, and the gentle strength of her idealistic optimism, are not.

ALKI: President Burger, your leadership of the Princeton library began in 1999 and has since seen library use increase by fifty percent. How did you do it?

BURGER: I think it’s because we’ve managed to combine the best of traditional public library services with that idea that the library can become the community’s living room. One of the things that we did was to heavily invest in adult programming, and use that as a hook to get people through the door. Our staff has created fantastic opportunities to meet with authors, engage in community debates, film festivals… podcasting… in honor of National Library Week we have a different poet podcast every single day of the month. So we’ve combined the best of the old and I think really ventured into some new territory.

ALKI: Considering the recent closure of federal, public and school libraries, how can we communicate the idea that libraries now matter more than ever?

BURGER: It’s a combination of being articulate spokespeople for what we do, and the impact of what we do – how that changes and shapes peoples lives… but sometimes it’s not enough to just talk about how great libraries are. That might not have a lot of meaning for someone who has not been in a library for ten or fifteen years and who has now shaped this image [that] those libraries are now totally useless in the age of the Internet. We need to really think about ways that we can attract these users and get them back through our doors, by creating new mental images that convey what libraries in the 21st century are all about.

Michael Wood is a graduate student in library science at the University of Washington Information School.
Unfortunately… there have been a number of significant library closures in this year that we need to pay careful attention to. The No Child Left Behind Act has really had a serious impact on school libraries in this country… many schools redirected money that was formerly invested in school libraries to beef up their testing prep programs. They didn’t see the connection that when kids read and have the support of the school library that they do perform better educationally.

**ALKI:** A false economy?

**BURGER:** A false economy, absolutely. The good news is that the No Child Left Behind Act is up for reauthorization, and that provides us with an opportunity to once again talk to our federal legislators about the importance of school libraries and to use some of that data that we have collected over the last five years to prove that schools that have invested in their libraries do have students who are performing better educationally… so that’s an opportunity for us.

I’m also concerned with the closing of federal libraries, which manifested itself most visibly this year with the closing of the EPA [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency] libraries both in Washington and in some of the regional networks across the country. It’s unfortunate that in a year in which global warming and the issues related to the environment have been so much in the news, that we have a major federal agency looking to restrict access to environmental information – some of which is unique to the EPA library and would never be available to people if they didn’t have access to these collections. We seem to have put a halt on that because we were pretty vocal about it, capturing the attention of the news media and congressional oversight hearings. In a war economy where we’re spending billions of dollars, they are looking for every penny they can grab, and libraries just seem to be convenient targets for that.

**ALKI:** Our Washington Library Association has been active and successful in promoting the public interest served by libraries at out state capital in Olympia. Here is a question from a member of our Legislative Planning Committee: How can we at the state level best interact with ALA to serve our common interests?

**BURGER:** Well there are a number of ways… ALA has invested a significant amount of resources in staffing (in Washington, D.C.) to make sure that we are covering all aspects of what has become a very complicated legislative and regulatory environment in Washington. How the state chapters can relate to what ALA is doing is by making sure that you communicate issues that are of concern at the state level that may escalate to be national concerns. The ALA Washington (D.C.) office is continually publishing legislative alerts and we want that to work both ways. If you are doing something here in Washington which is alerting your members to issues of legislative concern, that would be great if you could send Emails along to us so that we can be following it as well. ALA can mobilize members and member leaders to assist.

**ALKI:** With the baby boomers planning to retire in five to ten years, how are you creating an opportunity for the next generation of leaders?

**BURGER:** We need to make sure, for our library agenda to move forward, that we have strong leadership at the local, state and national level, and that can’t be concentrated in the hands of a select few, regardless of age – you know the baby boomers can’t hold on to all the power. So we need to be thinking about how we prepare and bring the next generation of leaders into our associations both at the state and national levels.

**ALKI:** Could Web 2.0 play some part in this?

**BURGER:** Absolutely… one of my presidential initiatives is the Emerging Leaders Program, and that was a very deliberate attempt on my part to fast track newly graduated librarians into the ALA structure in a way that would get them comfortable, familiar, and ready to accept leadership positions. ALA’s Washington office is on [the 3-D virtual world] Second Life, they are doing podcasts of issues of importance to the library community, there is an ALA Facebook which you can join. We have an ALA site on Flickr, which is a great chance for people to share their library photos, so we are reaching out and using the power of Web 2.0 to build community in a way that we haven’t been able to do in the past through our conferences and our publications, which are more one-on-one and episodic. With Web 2.0, technology can be a continuous community development of...

See BURGER on page 29.
Washington State Library
Ventures into Online Learning

By Theresa Kappus

Raise your hand if you’ve ever taken an online class or workshop. Now, raise your hand if you would consider taking an online class or workshop. Now explain to your coworkers why you raised your hand just now! At this year’s Washington Library Association conference, Chris Peters and Elizabeth Iaukea presented a session titled “Learn from your Living Room: An Online Learning Solution for Washington State.” The focus was on e-learning opportunities available through the Washington State Library for library staff and interested instructors.

Peters referred to a recent survey on the Washington State Library’s WebJunction site, where 93 percent of respondents had some e-learning experience and the rest would consider it. Many of us are veterans at participating in online webinars and the content of classes and workshops, especially for library employees, continues to evolve. The advantages are obvious: You can avoid travel expenses and at the state library and other library-related training sites, the online sessions are archived and accessible after the live session, so you can go back and review. In our interruption-prone profession, that’s a definite benefit! E-learning is also, as Peters put it, “chunk-able” – that is, you can pick and choose segments of a training program that address what it is you need to learn when you need to learn it.

Many of the disadvantages of online learning are also well known. It is not for everyone, that’s for sure. Having participated in the Association of College and Research Libraries’ “All Users are Local” class a few years back, I know I’m not a good candidate for any extended online class (self-discipline and self-motivation are “growth areas” for me), but it’s easy to take advantage of shorter e-learning workshops that take one to two hours to complete. Peters offered these suggestions for how to get the most out of an e-learning session:

- Set up your computer ahead of time. Make sure you have what you need (downloads, microphone, coffee) before the class starts.
- Let your colleagues know you’re in class. Close your office door, put up a sign or find a quiet place where you can focus.
- Close other computer programs to avoid distractions like e-mail, chat and yes, even Spider Solitaire.
- Have something to do with your hands: doodle or take notes.

The Washington State Library is experimenting with synchronous online learning or webinars. There are plans to offer blended training that would include homework. The platform used by the state library to deliver these sessions is Live Classroom, by Horizon Wimba. This is the same platform used by WebJunction for their classes and offered free to WebJunction subscribers. Peters demonstrated the platform at this session. It resembles other online training software such as Elluminate Live® or WebEx. Most of these programs are designed to work with PowerPoint along with other features such as live audio, a whiteboard, desktop sharing, chat and polling. Students with a microphone can raise their virtual hand to ask questions or make comments. “Microphonophobes” or those who are equipment-challenged can participate using the live chat component, which is also available to students throughout the session. Presenters can choose to use other options such as virtual breakout rooms for small group discussions and there’s also a webcam/video option for those with bandwidth to spare.

For presenters, platforms such as Live

See STATE LIBRARY on page 29.

Theresa Kappus is the interlibrary loan and distance services librarian at Gonzaga University. Photo by Rose Ferri.
Beyond Information:
Reading for Pleasure, Discovery and Personal Growth

By Brian Soneda

“I’ve volunteered to write about a boring program,” is the thought that popped into my head during the first minutes of this session. Thankfully things got better – much better.

Scott Condon, the first of the two Everett Public Library presenters at this session, is a gifted writer, but his understated tone and references to involved research on “afferent-based reading” did not strike a chord with me. He showed passion and skill, however, in championing the book and debunking the phrase “the container doesn’t matter” as he noted that visual adaptations of the written word, while sometimes fun, enjoyable and well done, cannot match the book.

By building a research-based platform, Condon set the stage for his Everett colleague Marlin Olsen’s more emotional, visceral response to reading for pleasure, which resembled a sermon from the pulpit. Olsen, a former minister and gifted orator, held the audience from start to finish. “I failed reading all the way through school… and failed second grade,” he said. Olsen thought he would be a failure all his life. He felt that he just couldn’t learn. He was lost.

“Reading has allowed me to become who I am” he said. And now is found. Applauding reading as an act of self awareness and learning as well as “unaided discovery,” Olsen shared a favorite quote from the poet William Yeats: “Education is not the filling of a pail; it’s the lighting of a fire.” Reading lit Olsen’s fire.

Olsen celebrated good literature as capable of providing the reader with experiences that he “can have no other way” and the ability to “achieve a life world” that he has never know as an “insider” seeing as the author or characters in a story see. “Reading allows us to join the conversation about life.” Far from being the reclusive and solitary activity that it is sometimes made out be, reading for pleasure can be deeply and constructively social in nature.

Several audience comments offered variants of the question, “How do you translate a love of good literature and an understanding of what reading for pleasure can do for your soul into readers’ advisory?” The presenters offered several ideas, including the use of the bibliography of a nonfiction book that the reader loved as a readers’ advisory tool.

See READING on page 24.

Spiderman is Not for Babies

By Brian Soneda

Having heard Lynne McKechnie, an associate professor at the University of Western Ontario, speak about her research on young readers last year, I absolutely jumped at the chance to attend and cover her “Spiderman Is Not for Babies” session for Alki. This time her focus was on “the secret lives of boys as readers” based on interviews of forty-three boys from ages four to fifteen, as well as a related inventorying of each boy’s personal book collection. As the father of a son in this age range, who reads and is a Spiderman fan, I thought “I have to do this!”

In a “research based in practice” model, each subject in this study of Toronto area boys was interviewed over a number of sessions either by McKechnie or by one of
her graduate assistant researchers. This study confirmed that boys are different from girls, in their reading habits and levels as well as in broader ways.

But what McKechnie seemed to enjoy most and what certainly entertained the session attendees were the comments and collections of real individuals. The boys chose their own nicknames, and thus privacy as well as humor was served – “Quiet Rebel” being a favorite.

What did they read or have in their personal collections? An eight-year-old loved *Butt Wars* and book talked it thusly to a researcher: “It’s funny. It’s all about butts, that kind of stuff.” Another subject responded less favorably to “classics” in his personal collection, gifts from an older relative. Asked if he planned to read them, he paused then said that he would, “maybe in ten or twenty-six years.” A third boy’s favorite book was the *World Almanac*.

The range of reading material ran from the expected, such as fiction series books and highly illustrated nonfiction like the Dorling Kindersley series, to the eyebrow-raising, including choices such as gaming manuals and IKEA catalogs. The manuals and catalogs came under a category McKechnie called “pragmatic reading” and in the case of the gaming manuals, one subject read very little else but devoured these manuals, because “it helps me win games.” Similarly, one boy enjoyed a fantasy novel, noting that “it’d make a good video game.”

McKechnie drew three main conclusions from her study:

- Boys are reading.
- Some of the most voracious readers are not “privileged” by schools, libraries or family support.
- We must redefine what constitutes reading so as to be inclusive of boys’ preferred texts.

In response to this last point, that we should not be so quick to judge “non-linear” or “pragmatic” reading, or make “that’s not really literature” comments, session attendee Wally Clark noted that as a boy he read comic books and the Colby series on planes, weapons, ships, etc. No, he noted, they were not great literature but he was reading and learning. Clark stated without hesitation: “Reading saved my life.”

**McKechnie Returns to Canada**

Lynne McKechnie was courted heavily by the University of Washington I-School for the new Beverly Cleary Professorship, much to the delight of early learning and education advocates from across the state. But in what she calls a “heart” decision, she is back in Ontario, having never actually applied for the Cleary position at UW. In a wonderful image shared in an email, she likened herself to Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*, who would rather be “back in the Shire eating two breakfasts than running around with Frodo.”

If the Shire is Toronto, then Frodo is the I-School Dean, Harry Bruce, whom McKechnie credits with being great to work with and for having put together “an excellent resource package” to try to convince her to sign on as the Cleary Professor. Her companions on the quest are the “twenty-six exceptional students” in her course titled “Materials for Younger Children” at the I-School, where she spent winter quarter in residence.

But the Shire beckoned. We can console ourselves that McKechnie’s quality research on the value of reading for children will continue to inform and enrich the library profession, regardless of her state or province or shire of origin.
Embracing the intangible seemed to be the theme of two technology sessions at this year’s Washington Library Association Conference. Rick Newell of the Online Computer Library Center presented “General Trends in Technical Services,” and Cecelia Hui, Chrissie Noonan and Matt Dawes, all of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, presented “Extending the Library: Building a Portal Community for Computer Scientists and IT Staff.”

Newell’s session was a thought piece enumerating things he and his colleagues have noticed. During the session he encouraged the audience to expound on things they may have noticed by tossing about such phrases as “Internet, Internet, Internet” and “Google rules.” He said libraries tend to be trendsetters, ahead of the business curve. For example library citations on Generation Y began in 2001, whereas in business and popular literature such citations show up about 2005. In some cases library initiative may outstrip their patrons’ expectations, as when people are surprised when libraries have e-books. Speaking of e-books… if it’s not electronic it doesn’t exist: True or not? Paper book sales are currently high. However, for research papers electronic access is clearly preferred. Speaking of electronic access, do new librarians who grew up with electronic resources understand what they are? (Do older – ahem, let’s call that more experienced – librarians understand them any better, or differently?)

How times have changed. In many instances format used to determine how to locate resources (think paper indexes for articles). Is this becoming more integrated now? Are some of our processes still format driven? Newell stated that Resource Description and Access is replacing Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition, and is a content standard that’s independent of format, designed for use in the digital environment; MARC may be replaced or be supplemented by “metadata standards,” content will ascend in importance over format, and description over transcription. The standards we use will be less Anglo-centric and Library of Congress-centric for catalogers, and the task of acquisitions will shift from buying things to managing access. As part of these changes, is digitization to be a new technical services function? Many in the audience claimed “digital librarianship” is part of the routine, not a subspecialty, even now. Will it be merged into regular departmental workflows as it becomes ever more routine?

Oh, and on the matter of routine there’s the question of “stewardship versus uniqueness.” Most libraries traditionally spend most of their time and resources cataloging and preserving high-use, popular, readily available items, and the rare items are left behind. Does this make sense? The audience was fervent on this question. On the face of it, no, but these are the items that people want, the ones that are used and most likely to be damaged, and the ones that don’t require arcane, specialized cataloging skills. Because of the latter point, a shift in focus would probably not mean much more access to rare materials anyway. In addition, current losses like that of series authority control make cataloger review of the more mundane but plentiful records an even greater priority.

The portals session illustrated some of the very concepts Newell brought up. The PNNL library is co-located with the Washington State University Tri-Cities campus, but they are physically removed from most of their primary patrons, so a strong Web presence is necessary. They employ a “travel librarian” program to visit researchers to demonstrate services, but rely heavily on the more intangible, but always accessible

Konny Thompson is the Foley Library acquisitions and serials librarian at Gonzaga University in Spokane.
home page to reach out. To enhance this experience for their users they designed a “home base” page, which consists of “portlets” that channel individual Web pages to deliver information tailored to various user groups with such elements as a vacation calendar, employment application forms and time-charging tools.

In order to develop a portal system the library used the BEA Aqualogic® platform. The goals were:

• Increase active use of library resources and services;
• Push PNNL into top-ranked computer science institutions listed in Essential Science Indicators;
• Increase publishing presence in the open literature;
• Promote peer-reviewed literature, and;
• Market services by pushing tailored information to users, creating a one-stop shopping experience for computer science and information technology staff by integrating multiple Web services in one location based on subject area disciplines.

Part of the resulting page consists of elements everyone sees (library logo, upcoming events schedule, catalog keyword search) and the other part is customized based on identity and the “community” one has joined up for. This section includes quick links for things like journals ranked by impact factor, a new book list based on call numbers, and new e-resources based on subject area.

Thus, this library has traveled the “Internet, Internet, Internet” road. They are climbing the technology curve. Searching is driven by content, not necessarily by format – although, since they used the integrated library system reporter function, which searched the catalog for the new books portlet, and a separate database maintained in-

Western Council Offers Certification for Library Workers

The Western Council of State Libraries, a professional association of twenty-two state libraries, recently announced the start of its Library Practitioner Certification program. The certificate will provide recognition for library directors and managers without a master’s degree in library science. This program is the first regional certification program for library workers in the United States.

Developed with support from an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant in response to calls for improved training opportunities, the certification is based on a set of competencies that define the skills and knowledge needed for success as a library practitioner. Library practitioners completing 240 contact hours in competency areas and having 1,080 hours of library experience will be awarded Western Council certification.

“Developing a certification program for this level of library worker represents an important step in Western Council’s efforts to advance the improvement of library services in communities not yet able to support a professional librarian,” said Jan Walsh, state librarian and president of the Western Council.

For complete information about the program, including how to be certified and how to become an approved education provider, go to http://certificate.westernco.org or contact Karen Strege at kstrege@msn.com.
Sessions Highlight Northwest History and Environmental Resources

By Rayette Sterling

The keynote address at this year’s Washington Library Association conference featured author Walt Crawford and library technology expert Sarah Houghton-Jan discussing the future of libraries and the implications of the socially networked world. In a nutshell: How do libraries connect? Much of this discussion was nothing really new. But it did highlight the perceived generational differences between new librarians and traditional library customers. What did I learn? People like libraries. Libraries will adapt to changing technologies. And libraries need to be welcoming to both traditionalists and Millennials.

The conference sessions I attended were more practical, with a local focus. A highlight for me was the session titled “Washington’s Stories: History Online at the State Library.” The session covered the Washington History Online project and provided an overview and update of resources available from the Washington State Library. Deputy State Librarian Marlys Rudeen’s presentation was lively and informative.

The site has three main collections: Classics in Washington History, Historical Maps, and Historic Washington Newspapers. The classics section provides full-text access to regional history materials, including many of the old out-of-print county histories. New features include the ability to browse by subjects, which fall into broad categories that make navigation easy for middle and high school students. They include exploration and early travel, county and regional history, wagon trains and the Oregon Trail, Native Americans, pioneer life, military history, territorial and state government, luring folks west, and the newest edition, natural history. Rudeen mentioned that they will be adding a new subject heading for women’s stories in the near future.

The historical map section uses a two-tiered subject interface, which can be a little clunky. The user needs to select a time period then a map type. The categories for map type seemed a bit confusing and non-intuitive. However, once you’ve found your map the data display is remarkable. The images are retrieved quickly, and the clarity of image is excellent.

The newspapers section has more search options including the “Moments in History” feature. Under this heading you will find a list of topics and articles from historic newspapers. The school librarians in the audience almost visibly jumped for joy. If you have not yet visited the site I highly recommend it, www.secstate.wa.gov/history. A truly fabulous resource for state history – and primary source material, too!

The second session I attended, “Researching the Environment: Washington, Pacific Northwest and National Resources,” was sponsored by the WLA Reference Interest Group and the Northwest Government Information Network, an organization founded by documents librarians. Although not as wiz-bang as the Washington history session, the presentation included useful information for finding resources on environmental topics. The four presenters were: Herrick Heitman, of the Washington State Library and the NGIN, Rob Lopresti, a Western

See HISTORY on page 28.
Listening Helped Radio Show Host Find Her Voice

By Margaret Thomas

Libraries and librarians used to scare radio talk show host Diane Rehm.

Her Turkish-immigrant parents worried that too much education would come between their children and their ethnic heritage, Rehm told an audience of about 500 at an evening appearance co-sponsored by the Washington Library Association. In her family, words and books were considered dangerous, says Rehm, who has since interviewed literary giants such as John Updike, Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou on her Washington, D.C.-based call-in show.

Days before her Kennewick appearance, the 70-year-old Rehm fell into a pothole and broke her ankle. Seated cross-legged in a chair on stage beside a large bouquet of flowers, she briefly described her background before opening the floor to questions from admirers who lined up behind a microphone in front of the stage.

“Our mutual love of books makes librarians a terrific audience for me,” Rehm says later in an e-mail interview. Soon after speaking at the WLA conference in April, she was off the air for voice treatments. Rehm was diagnosed nearly ten years ago with spasmodic dysphonia, a neurological condition characterized by involuntary movement of the larynx, and requires treatment about three times a year. “It’s gotten easier,” she writes. “It usually takes about ten days for the voice to fully return. Sometimes I can get back on in less time, but I’m rather breathy.”

Books were a natural nexus for Rehm and the WLA crowd. “We receive about 150 books a week from publishers,” she says. “If the book doesn’t interest me personally, I won’t do it.”

In response to a question about censorship, Rehm recounted the time she refused to cancel an interview with author Salman Rushdie, whose novel Satanic Verses had provoked death threats from radical Muslims. “I was so proud to have him on the show,” says Rehm. “I just do believe that the voices of those who have been shouted down must be heard.”

The author who shouldn’t expect another invitation from The Diane Rehm Show? Tom Clancy. With a new blockbuster out, Clancy showed up at the studio in dark aviator glasses and refused to shake hands. When he offered only single-word responses to her questions, Rehm opened the phone lines.

Diane Rehm has hosted her own national call-in radio show since 1984.

The first caller chastised the author for being rude to Rehm. Clancy responded by removing his sunglasses and insisting they were having a “great time.” Says Rehm, “He’s an arrogant man. So I won’t have him on again.”

Rehm has authored two books herself: an autobiography called Finding My Voice (1999), and a series of personal essays about marriage titled Toward Commitment (2002), which she wrote with her husband of more than fifty years, retired lawyer John Rehm. She says she hopes to write another book someday about the art of listening. “I really do believe in conversation and the exchange of ideas.”

More immediately, Rehm plans to take a week’s vacation with her family in the Poconos mountains of Pennsylvania. In August, she and her husband will take a clipper ship cruise around Italy, Croatia and Greece.

Margaret Thomas is a research librarian at the Washington State University Extension Energy Program in Olympia.
Carrying Your Life in Your Pocket: Portable Electronics in Libraries

By Mary Wise

Gadget lust – where will it end? Smaller, cheaper, faster. That’s what we want. And we want it now! But is it feasible for libraries to supply the gadgets or the software for them?

Michael Porter of online community WebJunction led an energetic conference session titled “Carrying Your Life in Your Pocket: Portable Electronics in Libraries.” Porter brought along an array of portable electronic gadgets, and invited the audience to display theirs, too. Many did have gadgets – some had several: cell phones, personal digital assistants, portable games, and digital cameras.

Some people just like gadgets. But Porter thinks of technology as a tool and reminds us to keep in mind how consumer trends will affect libraries. Will we need to purchase every new gadget that comes along? Probably not, but some will be necessary because library patrons will want to use them, or need to use them. Porter urged us not to be intimidated by gadgets. They are, after all, simply computers, no matter what function they have been designed to perform.

When researching new gadgets for the library, people need to be aware of convergence. Does the new software work on preexisting hardware? Does it require the purchase of new expensive hardware to operate the software? Is it compatible with other devices and programs? One example is iPod. Since so many people have iPods, it would be logical to think they would work well for audio or electronic books. But iPod isn’t a good fit for libraries, because of its proprietary software. Better choices for libraries are NetLibrary or OverDrive. Libraries need to balance the content they provide with the communities they serve. Technology is an opportunity for libraries to be where the users are.

Porter mentioned Moore’s Law, which refers to Intel’s co-founder Gordon Moore. In 1965, Moore made a prediction that is currently loosely interpreted to mean that computing power will double approximately every eighteen to twenty-four months. In any case, gadgets are getting more powerful and cheaper. As these devices get more powerful, they need more power. This has led to advances in batteries and battery life.

Here are just a few of the gadgets currently available:

Chumby. It was created using open source software, and is currently in beta testing. Chumby looks like a combination of an alarm clock and a bean bag. It uses tiny programs to display information, music and photos via a wireless Internet connection.

Voice over Internet Protocol. This allows people to use their computers like telephones, using headsets or microphones and speakers. Some systems require users to call only those using the same program, but others can be used to call anyone, with any kind of phone (cell phone, long distance, international, etc.). Some programs let users connect a regular telephone to the computer. Some phone services using VoIP are Vonage and Skype. Customers can purchase a wireless phone to use with VoIP services, so that they don’t have to sit in front of the computer to talk.

Apple iLife. Software that helps Apple users create and organize music, movies, photos, and DVDs. It also includes GarageBand, which records and edits podcasts.

iTV. A device from Apple that connects to your television and lets you download movies from iTunes and watch them on TV.

TiVo. This is a digital television recorder. You can program any series of movies or shows, and it will record everything in the selected category, for later viewing.

Slingbox. Allows you to watch TV (from your house) on any computer or mobile device.

Radio frequency identification. Tags come in active and passive varieties. Active tags have their own power source and transmit over a

See GADGETS on page 30.
Snapshots of the Conference

Photos by Rose Ferri, Mary Wise and Martha Parsons.
In Olympia

In May, Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire signed House Bill 5882, clearing the way for construction of the Heritage Center on the Capitol campus in Olympia. The center is expected to house a museum and auditorium in addition to the State Library and Archives. The measure raises incorporation and county filing fees to pay for the $111 million center, which is expected to open in about five years.

In D.C.

The Washington Library Association-sponsored team to national Library Legislative Day, held May 1 and 2 in Washington, D.C., met with Washington Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, and Reps. Adam Smith and Rick Larsen, in addition to aides from other offices. The state delegation advocated for Library Services and Technology Act funding; equal access to the Internet, or net neutrality; and the Universal Service Fund for Schools and Libraries Program, known as the Education Rate or E-rate.

Left-to-Right: Rand Simmons, Brian Soneda, Sen. Maria CantwellWestern Council Offers Certification for Library Workers

The Western Council of State
Winners of the President’s Award are announced at the annual Washington Library Association conference. Out-going President Carolynne Myall selected this year’s winners: State Librarian Jan Walsh and Carol Schuyler of the Kitsap Regional Library.

In presenting the awards, Myall noted that Walsh became state librarian just as the Washington State Library had narrowly escaped closure and was forced to downsize and reorganize. “Under Ms. Walsh’s leadership, WSL has successfully found new ways to serve, partner and connect with the Washington library community – a statewide library marketing initiative, book lists and contests, and a proposed statewide catalog, among many other projects – and has secured its important place in the library community and state government.” Walsh currently serves as chair of the WLA Awards Committee and as Federal Relations Co-Coordinator.

Myall mentioned the many ways that Schuyler has served the association, including a stint as president. “Ms. Schuyler’s productive and well-organized term was unfortunately disrupted by the governor’s attempt to eliminate the Washington State Library, so she traveled frequently to Olympia to lead the library community’s successful campaign to save the WSL.” Schuyler currently chairs the Washington Library Friends, Foundations, Trustees, and Advocates, a WLA interest group.
Association Announces Merit Award Winners

The Washington Library Association recognized the following people at an awards luncheon at the annual conference held in the Tri-Cities in April.

**Lifetime Membership, Emeritus Membership**
**Tony Wilson**, former director of the Library Technician Program, Highline Community College
Wilson is a long-time supporter and former president of the Washington Library Association. He created the library technician program at Highline, administered the program and taught for forty years. He also has been responsible for cataloging small private libraries in the state.

**Lifetime Membership, Emeritus Membership**
**Ellen Newberg**, former director, Kitsap Regional Library
When Newberg retired she ended a forty year library career. Highly supportive of WLA, she encouraged staff at all levels to participate. She was active on the WLA Legislative Planning Committee, and stayed in close contact with elected officials on library issues.

**Lifetime Membership, Emeritus Membership**
**Amory Peck**, trustee, Whatcom County Library
Peck has been serving Washington libraries for twenty-three years. When she accepted the Robert B. Downs Award for defense of intellectual freedom, she said, “We could do no less than protect a very basic right of our patrons: their ability to read widely, curiously, broadly, even dangerously … in complete certainty that their choices would be confidential.”

**Merit Award for Advancement in Library Service**
**Dan Howard**, assistant director, North Central Regional Library
Howard has established the North Central Regional Library, the largest library district in the state, as a leader in rural library services to children. The key to his success is that he not only knows the importance of children’s programs, but he sets high standards, then measures their effectiveness.

**Merit Award for Outstanding Performance in a Special Area**
**Peggy Bryan**, business manager, Whitman County Library
Bryan created an innovative program of outreach education to Whitman County schools. Teachers receive credit for learning about the library’s databases, Web site, virtual reference, online catalog, and online research skills.
WALE Employee of the Year
Mary Wise, catalog librarian, Central Washington University

Wise has worked on three Washington Association of Library Employees conferences, and has been WALE’s photographer for the past two years. She is one of the few librarians who is actively involved in WALE.

CAYAS Visionary
Sandy Zell, youth services librarian, Pierce County Library System

Zell is known for her innovative programs. She finds ways to bring readers together whether it be locally or internationally. She is an amazing ambassador for reading and libraries.

WLFFTA Distinguished Service Award
Shirley Roe Painter, trustee, Mid-Columbia Library System

Painter, a school librarian, became a trustee after retiring. As chairwoman of the board, she has led the way with new board governance by committee, supported the new computer reservation system, and self-check system. She is broad minded and was one of the first board member to go “on the road” to discover new trends and ideas.

WLFFTA Distinguished Service Award
Robert Schultz, trustee, Mid-Columbia Library System

Schultz has been chair of the board for at least four years and served on its finance committee since its inception. As a lawyer, he brings legal experience to the board, and is notable for his wisdom, sound judgment and creative ideas that have resulted in improved library services and efficiency.
Effective Job Training in Five Steps

By Ann Reeves

Someone once told me graduate school is sometimes referred to as *gradual school* because you gradually learn you don't want to go to school anymore. And so it stands true for my experience in grad school: After graduation, business degree in hand, I ran into the waiting arms of a major petroleum corporation, thus launching my career in the oil industry. However, one real pearl of wisdom I did manage to take away from my human resource management course was the importance of the five critical steps in adult training.

The steps are:

- **Make your expectations clear.** Articulate exactly what you expect in terms of skills and performance.

- **Train around those expectations.** Provide training that equips staff to meet the expectations.

- **Allow staff to execute.** Give staff the opportunity to actually perform the skills they were trained for.

- **Provide feedback.** It is crucial you make known what you think of their performance – positive or negative. This gives staff the chance to correct what went wrong or, perhaps for you to understand you may not have communicated expectations adequately.

- **Require advanced or refresher training.** This step ensures your staff is keeping their skills current and it communicates to staff that you are interested in their professional growth.

And even after a seven-year stint in the Navy, a lengthy stay in the oil biz, and now having landing in the not-for-profit sector, I've come to realize these five steps readily apply to any workplace environment and can easily be translated to suit any type of business.

Make your expectations very clear. This is your opportunity to outline exactly what the job functions are and what level of performance is expected during training and on the job. Be as articulate as possible to eliminate any chance of doubt regarding what needs to be accomplished. After describing the expectations, ask if your employee has any questions. Writing down your expectations also allows your employee to have a reference during training. Keep the written expectations on file to serve as a tool for discussions during any performance appraisal, whether it is a scheduled event or a spontaneous one.

Train around those expectations. When I bought my niece her first pair of ice skates I made it clear I wanted her to make the Winter Olympics in the future. So, naturally, I talked her parents into giving her skating lessons. The old adage “Keep the end in sight” illustrates this point. If you have a clear idea of what your end result needs to be, then you have the designs for exactly what training needs to be offered. Have the discussion with your employee about what will be covered during training and the timeframe for completion. Writing down the training schedule gives your employees the means to keep track of their training. It's important to continuously review your training program to keep topics current and relevant.
Allow staff to execute. This is the litmus test of how well the employee absorbed the training – or how well the trainer delivered the training. Allow your employee to actually perform the newly learned job functions. There is some risk of a faulty or less-than-acceptable performance but it gives the employee the chance to try out the new skills and make adjustments and modifications to meet standards. Encourage the employee to ask questions. If this on-the-job performance is considerably less than adequate, a closer look into the training process and curriculum may be warranted. Is the trainer delivering a quality program? Are the training goals reasonable and attainable?

Provide feedback. Arguably, this is the most important of the five steps. Clairvoyance has never been part of a job description, except maybe for motherhood, and this is where you have the chance to give your opinion of your employee’s performance. Give plenty of details so your employee can compare what you’ve mentioned to what was covered during training, or perhaps forgotten since training. It is important to give both positive and negative feedback for a fair assessment of the job done. The key here is to make sure your positive feedback is genuine and truthful and your negative feedback is delivered with diplomacy. Also allow the employee to give you feedback on their training experience; this will give you sharper insights to better manage your training program and improve it for future employees.

Require refresher or advanced training. It is unreasonable to expect employees to remember every granular detail from their training and it’s important to provide refresher training on even the most basic skills. With computers and technology being such an integral part of our work environment, advanced training in these constantly changing fields is essential to stay effective in serving our patrons. A well-trained, knowledgeable staff is far less likely to experience job-related stress and job dissatisfaction and less likely to quit. In addition to honing employees’ job skills, offering advanced training tells your staff you are genuinely interested in their professional development and satisfaction with the job.

Providing a positive learning environment where clear communication is the cornerstone, with plenty of opportunity for improvement and feedback, creates a workplace where you and your employee can learn together. As for my Olympics-bound niece… she’s landing axels just fine.
Scholarship Awarded to Ana Alvarez

By Nancy Huling

“The significant event that launched me onto this career path occurred in 1996 while I was working as a library clerk. A Spanish speaking woman and her father asked me if I would teach them how to use a computer in Spanish. . . I will always remember how that early interaction with the father and daughter ignited my commitment and passion for improving library services to the Spanish speaking and other immigrant communities that have been historically underserved by public libraries.”


This and similar stories reveal the passion that 2007 WLA scholarship recipient Ana Alvarez has for creating and offering library programs for the Spanish-speaking community, ultimately inspiring her to obtain a master's degree in library and information science. Alvarez juggles a position at the Seattle Public Library with her coursework in the Information School at the University of Washington. She has held a variety of positions in her fifteen years with the Seattle Public Library. Alvarez served as a temporary program coordinator on the Community Programs Team, creating, producing and implementing library programs targeted toward specific language communities. In General Reference Services, she provides information and referral services, and has been particularly involved in outreach to the Spanish-language community.

Reading

Continued from page 9.

The writing cited as informing or intriguing the author of a book that moved the reader might logically also move the reader.

The speakers also recommended “litblogs,” such as the Litblog Co-op at www.lbc.typepad.com. The site describes itself as “uniting the leading literary weblogs for the purpose of drawing attention to the best of contemporary fiction, authors and presses that are struggling to be noticed in a struggling marketplace.” A quick look revealed an eclectic mix of text excerpts from books, author interviews and a podcast featuring Marshall Klimasewiski, author of The Cottagers, a debut novel set on Vancouver Island.

Several audience members at the session laughed and nodded in recognition when Olsen described the ultimate compliment for any readers’ advisory specialist: “Whatever you just read, put it on hold for me.”

Of special note has been her work with the local Spanish-language media in promoting library services. Alvarez has shared her knowledge and experience through presentations to foundations to secure funds to support programming, and at the Washington and Utah Library Association conferences.

Once she has completed her master’s degree, Alvarez hopes to continue to provide and improve outreach services to immigrant and refugee communities.

Ana Alvarez is head of the Reference and Research Services Division at the University of Washington’s Suzzallo and Allen Libraries.

Photo by Rose Ferri.
How my library moved out from under me and why I’m not sad:
Bibliographic Musings and the Metaphysics of Libraries
(Part Two)

By Tony Wilson

Literacy

The slogan “Be all you can be, read” seems to assume literacy itself as an unmitigated good. While we should eagerly teach reading to anyone who wants to learn, we should note two things. First, teaching literacy (or English as a second language) in a library provides us with a clientele sufficiently ignorant of the issues at hand to fit simple modernist assumptions. (With pervasive media, it is hard to find a degree of ignorance to merit our traditional service assumptions.) Second, literacy assumes the primacy and superiority of a linear, sequential, left-brain, male-dominated perspective on reality.

While they are accessible only to the literate, three interesting sources on the downside of literacy are briefly annotated below:

First is Leonard Shlain’s Alphabet Versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image. Shlain surveys the history of the world to show that literacy escalates a male, left-brain, linear worldview and leads to the persecution of right-brained, imagistic, female views. Consider troubadours and chivalry in the illiterate Dark Ages, followed by witch burning and religious persecution on the tails of literacy. The primacy of the written over the spoken facilitates fundamentalism, since the written text is seen as absolute. Many legal proceedings still require an actual “hearing,” so the primacy of the written is not absolute even in a society of laws.

Next is David Abram’s Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World. While Shlain seems grouchy and bookish, offending certain feminists, Abram is a youngish eco-activist, selected by the Utne Reader as “one of the hundred visionaries who are changing the world.” Abram sees the insertion of vowels in the written language as causing a crucial shift of perception away from personal interaction with the world, causing the loss of our ability to interact with animals and the environment, a loss of reciprocity that allows us to trash the environment. Abram, highly praised by hippies and environmentalists, writes convincingly of a return to reciprocity with the natural world.

Third and most radical is an article from Species Traitor: An Insurrectionary Anarchist Primitivist Journal titled “A War of Words: A Closer Examination of Literacy,” by Sky Hiat. The journal itself predicts and applauds the collapse of civilization. Hiat sees literacy as requiring “the breakdown of tribes and the rise of secular cities . . . a decay of community and removal from the land.” Civilization’s collapse will provide “a return to orality”… [people will] pass on history and learning culturally where it is stored in the human collective.” Hiat criticizes educators who “burden youngsters with summer reading lists as though intimate interaction with life were already taboo… [We] can study distant galaxies but can’t name the trees in the back yard.”

I like my own level of literacy and would rather deepen it than turn it off, even if I knew how to turn it off. Abram does give me some hope of transcending it at appropriate moments. The sources I’ve cited and a general post-modern perspective, however, tell me that as librarians we should not become smug little missionaries carrying

Tony Wilson is a retired librarian who lives in Federal Way.

“Over the last forty years, what I’ve been exposed to in library philosophy has mostly been ongoing attempts to make platitudes exciting or even respectable.”

See BIBLIOGRAPHIC MUSINGS on page 26.
the unblemished truth of the alphabet to the poor, ignorant natives. Rather we should, with some humility, assist those who choose to abandon one worldview to learn another. Further, we should try to discern and treasure what we can of the perspective that is being lost.

Library salaries

The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property, by Lewis Hyde, made clear to me why high salaries for librarians would seem inappropriate and make library service something less admirable than we have always believed. Hyde looks at anthropologic studies of gifts in tribal cultures, at gifts in mythology, and even at Ezra Pound’s deteriorating “vegetable money.” The ideas and artistic gifts in which the librarian traffics are not commodities whose transfer is defined in the money economy, but gifts that confer status by being given away rather than accumulated. Much like you would not sell your kidney to your mother or expect better care of your child by paying double the prevailing rate for babysitters, making librarians rich would somehow denigrate the service.

Seeing libraries as functioning in the gift economy also explains the ritualistically low rate of library overdue fines – “If you don’t bring it back, it will be three cents a day,” is what I remember from childhood. It is not the money that is significant, as it has been at Blockbuster, but the shame of changing your relationship to the library from one in the gift economy to one in a money economy.

Collection development

There was a point at which those statistical reports of eighty percent of patron needs being met by twenty percent of the collection, or similar figures, seemed to have obvious implications for collection development. Clearly, we should devote more resources to what most people were requesting. Amazon and the Internet may have reversed that implication. Chris Anderson’s The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More cites a digital music collection selling at least one track a quarter from 98 percent of a 10,000 CD collection. Perhaps our collections should not so much be servicing the mass market as making a big market in the huge range of niche interests. Such a shift might be more compatible with library values including nondirective access to the greatest diversity.

Anderson gives two imperatives for a thriving Long Tail business: “1. Make everything available. 2. Help me find it.” Those imperatives may well apply to us.

Seriously deep philosophy

Over the last forty years, what I’ve been exposed to in library philosophy has mostly been ongoing attempts to make platitudes exciting or even respectable. In contrast, I’m glad to find a heavy-duty and serious discussion with an index and a thirty-one-page bibliography by John M. Budd, Knowledge and Knowing in Library and Information Science: A Philosophical Framework.

I’ve read the whole book and wish I could say I’ve gotten around it – or could take a course from someone who has. Nevertheless, I do find great pleasure in seeing a Foucaultian attempt to provide a genealogy of library thought and the relations of power and knowledge in that context. I do find a few specifics that might guide us in our “praxis” (by which Budd means our technical practices in full appreciation of their social and ethical dimensions). Citing various sources, Budd distinguishes three types of knowledge: techne, knowledge of how; episteme, knowing that; and phronesis, which is knowledge that unites self and other. Such considerations should apply to the negotiations we pursue with our clientele (unless our system is moving us around so as to preclude development of a clientele at all, keeping service technical, efficient and humanistically sterile).

The reference from Budd I’ve had the most fun pursuing is the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, who makes a distinction between monologic thinking, as in traditional science, and dialogic thinking that involves an “exchange of selves” whereby both the perceiver and the perceived are changed. Such an exchange seems consistent with Abram’s relation to wolves and sea lions, and the user’s relationships established in the LibraryThing, a collaborative online cataloging service. It could well become part of our client negotiation to earn permission for a phronetic dialog.

Views of the path ahead

The most exciting book on my list is Peter Morville’s Ambient Findability. At the top of
the cover is “What we find changes who we become.” Morville’s introduction suggests that finding his book is less likely than winning the lotto, so he wants to know if it was found by keyword, by browsing a library, through a friend, or what? He says what the book is about is in the eye of the beholder, and as for who it is for, he asks us to figure it out and send them a copy. He lists searchable keywords for each chapter and provides links to related Web sites.

Most of the book is a delightful “Gee whiz!” tour through cyber wayfinding and effective Web design. Toward the end, however, Morville cites former president of the American Library Association Michael Gorman’s comments on blogs and Google and suggests most librarians were “horrified by this high-profile display of ignorance. . . . This unfortunate incident exposed the true fault lines within librarianship.” Morville asserts that the fault line is not “between librarians and computer scientists, but an ongoing revolution in the definition of authority. At one extreme, conservatives cling to traditional views and values, nostalgic for the totalitarian regimes of the Oxford English Dictionary and the Encyclopedia Britannica. In total opposition, liberals embrace the progressive decentralization of the blogosphere . . . .”

With all due respect for Britannica, I’m finding Wikipedia far more useful for anything I want to think or write or just know about. I may need the OED to write or read certain kinds of poetry, but for daily intellectual needs, Google’s “define:” is just plain better.

As a technical services librarian, I was trying to turn our selections into one big book. Now OCLC is key wording Library of Congress Subject Headings, which will make that out-of-control device usable by ordinary librarians, and the Web is turning all the books and everything else into one big book. Between Net Snippets and free Google collaboration software, I have the Memex (memory extender), the United Nations Scholar’s Workstation, and much more at my fingertips.

Libraries still have a great future. We need to attend more stringently than ever to our traditional values of freedom to read and the privacy of readers. We need to add to our repertoire a new level of aggressive defense for the intellectual commons. Though in my head it is still somewhat undefined, with adequate defense of our values, a liberal post-modern library is a delightful prospect. Libraries free from internal and external fundamentalisms can reach our highest ideal—enhancing individuals’ efforts at creating themselves, and possibly attain dialogic relations with each other and the world.

Part One of Wilson’s musings on librarianship appeared in the March 2007 issue of Alki.
History
Continued from page 13.

Washington University Librarian; David Liberty, of StreamNet; and Jonathan Betz-Zall of Highline Community College. The panel discussed sources of information from various agencies.

Betz-Zall began by introducing the audience to his Ecolibrarian Web site, http://ecolibrarian.org. This site provides bibliographies on environmental topics, with a direct link to www.WorldCat.org. Both Lopresti and Heitman highlighted resources available from government depository libraries. The final resource introduced was StreamNet, www.streamnet.org. StreamNet is a partnership between tribal, federal and private not-for-profit agencies. Their primary focus is fish and wildlife data in the Pacific Northwest. However, Liberty pointed out that fish and wildlife are impacted by many forces, so information on treaty rights, water law, hydrology and dam construction are within the scope of the project. The Web site offers interactive data mapping as well as a downloadable database. In addition, StreamNet accepts email reference request from the public.

What did I learn from these two sessions? There is a wealth of information available about Washington state. These sessions connected me to useful reference sources that are relevant to my patrons. Exactly what I came for.
librarians. As the newest generation moves forward they will have been born digital. And if we are not able to relate to them in the way that they relate to and perceive information – if we’re not comfortable with Friendster and Facebook and blogging and wikis and any other technology that comes along – we are going to be in danger of not being able to serve that generation of users. We need to be tech savvy.

**ALKI:** Looking back from your perspective, nearing the end of your term as the president of our national library organization, what do you regret?

**BURGER:** I had in my mind using the theme “Libraries Transform Communities” that we needed to invest in transforming libraries, and part of me said: “And I’d really like to transform ALA as well.” And then I realized that I was only going to be president for a year. I think that these two things come together: that younger librarians, a new generation of leaders, may not think that the ALA that served my generation well serves their needs and interests well. Not in the broader sense, but in terms of its organizational structure. They may be less willing to wait years to get on committees, or they may not understand the whole bureaucracy that surrounds how certain things get done. If I could really dive into that, I would have wanted that to have been a big focus of what I did, too.

**ALKI:** The traditional values that libraries have always addressed: to provide a physical space for study, for scholarship and contemplation, access to a physical collection – this is primarily the duty that public libraries should preserve and not change. I don’t hear you disagreeing with that.

**BURGER:** No. It’s not an “either/or.” And that’s the important point here. We need to provide physical spaces where people can come together as a community, and we need to provide virtual spaces where that can happen; and the information that we provide can happen in a physical space or it can happen via the Web. That’s the beauty: It allows us to reach thousands of people who might not take the time to come to a library. What we are seeing in both of these instances is this tremendous need – whether it’s the hundreds of people who show up on a Tuesday evening for a library program, or the hundreds of people who may be online talking to each other in a chat room, we are seeing that people are seeking community. And I think that our opportunity as librarians is to create those opportunities for community, whether it is in a physical or a virtual space.

**ALKI:** President Burger, thank you: for coming to our Washington Library Association convention, and for sharing your thoughts with *Alki*.

**BURGER:** Thanks, Michael, for inviting me to spend some time with you this afternoon.

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**State Library**

Continued from page 8.

Classroom open up more opportunities for delivering training and instruction. You might want to consider it for software training for branch libraries or student workers. It’s a great way to teach people who, because of time or distance, are difficult to reach. Like anything else, it takes practice to develop good online course material and like most other technology-based functions, the best way to get practice is to just do it! (I used a trial version of Elluminate Live! to deliver library instruction to a group of Gonzaga students in Dawson Creek, B.C., last year. Preparing for the session was a learning experience in itself!) Many companies offer trial or free mini-versions of their product that can be used for practice sessions or for smaller groups. I’m going to experiment with Elluminate’s free V-Room for online “office” sessions with my distant students.

For presentation materials and handouts from this session, go to the WLA Web site: [www.wla.org/conferences/wla2007/pdf/Learn_Living_Room.pdf](http://www.wla.org/conferences/wla2007/pdf/Learn_Living_Room.pdf)


- Presenter Guide: [http://tinyurl.com/2p8k2j](http://tinyurl.com/2p8k2j)

If you’re interested in presenting classes for WSL, contact Chris Peters at peters@secstate.wa.gov

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definitive answers on the right direction for WLA remain elusive, yet an expanded and engaged membership serves as the president’s greatest asset in shaping the future of the organization. While guiding an organization strongly based in the perspectives of the public library, Parsons recognizes the potential for WLA to reach out to academic and special libraries for a more representative association, and views next year’s conference in partnership with the Oregon Library Association and its greater academic presence as a chance to make inroads into more specialized libraries in Washington.

Not content to look only one year ahead, Parsons envisions a future WLA with an interactive Web site, a membership database allowing for greater networking and skill sharing, an expanded continuing-education program targeting library employees often overlooked by their organization’s hierarchy. Yet all this depends on the library workers of Washington seeing participation in the association as Parsons does; as a career-changing and life-altering opportunity to shape their own workplace.

In her final words to those library workers who choose to remain uninvolved, Parsons’ message of inclusiveness is coupled with a challenge: “This really is their association. It’s whatever they want to make of it,” she says. “It’s a volunteer effort to network, to share, to promote libraries in this state. It doesn’t work if people don’t get involved.”

The new president has spoken. Will you?

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**Gadgets**

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greater range, about a hundred feet. Passive tags rely on the transmitter for power and have a shorter range of about twenty feet. They also cost less. RFIDs are already in use in many retail stores and some libraries, but their use is controversial because of privacy issues.


**Keyboards** for PDAs, smart phones, laptops, and other mobile devices. Small, foldable keyboards from various manufacturers. Frogpad, a small keyboard operated by one hand, allows users to hold paperwork in the other hand. The Virtual Laser Keyboard is a device that projects a laser image of a keyboard onto a flat surface. The user types on it just like a regular keyboard. It is connected to the mobile device by Bluetooth.

Some gadgets to watch for in the future are: Plastic Logic, which is a portable electronic reading device. It looks like a plastic protector for a notebook page, with a thin row of buttons down one side. It can be held and read like a magazine or newspaper. Universal Display Corporation’s flexible organic light emitting device is made from a flexible metal foil, which can be rolled into a tube for storage. This could be used for movie viewing, or as an electronic book reader.

Currently, libraries don’t have the infrastructure in place to compete with all of the emerging technologies. In looking at new products or technologies, we should ask ourselves what the product does for the library or for our patrons. Even if there is a positive application, do the technologies interface well with library infrastructure?

One question that needs to be considered is will the library provide devices for electronic and audio books, or will the patrons be required to provide their own devices for downloading? Several companies currently provide electronic and audio software, such as NetLibrary and OverDrive. Playaway produces audio books that need no player. They have a player built into every book.

Porter pointed out that when starting out with new technology such as a PDA or MP3 player, it is a good idea to start small. Buy a less expensive model or one with smaller capacity and try it out.

While libraries struggle to keep up with the latest super gadget, we must keep in mind that consumption and production drive each other. We must also remember that while it is all right to jump on a fad if it is useful, we must concentrate more on practical gadgets, and less on geeky, trendy ones. Is there a balance between cool and practical, fun and educational, trendy and practical? That seems to be our mission now.

What about all the gadgets Porter and the audience displayed? I want them. All. And I want them now.

So look in your pocket, purse or briefcase. What gadgets do you have? Are you truly carrying your life (or your library’s life) in your pocket?

Porter reminded us to watch WebJunction for ways libraries can use technology and gadgets to help meet the needs of our patrons. WebJunction is an online community, where library staff share ideas and resources http://webjunction.org.

Find out more about Porter, alias Libraryman, at www.libraryman.com.
The Secret to His Success: ‘Our Mutual Friend’

By David Wright

So, Kurt Vonnegut died. No matter what we may think of his books, many of us who work in libraries will have come to regard Vonnegut as sort of a truant co-worker, so regularly have we been approached over the years by patrons asking, “Where’s Vonnegut?” (Or as one overly familiar young man once asked me, “Hey, where’s Kurt?”) The answer will be almost as inevitable as the question: Kurt’s not here right now, not on our shelves, anyway. Loved, looted and lost – that’s our Vonnegut.

Well, he’s in high-loss heaven now, alongside Charles Bukowski, Hunter S. Thompson, Donald Goines and Louis L’Amour, smiling down as all those errant copies of his works wing their way off our shelves and into readers’ lives. Send up a prayer to stop the bleeding, and he’ll just chuckle and call down, “Information wants to be free, remember?” On second thought, he’s probably been reincarnated into the infant psyche of some fledgling freethinker, even as the spirit of Mark Twain once passed into the gentler vessel of Vonnegut, after dwelling some years in the inhospitably acidic host of H.L. Mencken, or so rumor has it.

Vonnegut naturally loved libraries, and he said some flattering things about us in his last book – A Man Without a Country – to wit: “I want to congratulate librarians, not famous for their physical strength or their powerful political connections or their great wealth, who, all over this country, have staunchly resisted anti-democratic bullies who have tried to remove certain books from their shelves, and have refused to reveal to thought police the names of persons who have checked out those titles. So the America I loved still exists, if not in the White House or the Supreme Court or the Senate or the House of Representatives or the media. The America I love still exists at the front desks of our public libraries.”

Thanks, Kurt. Right back at you.

I was recently among those paying their respects at an event devoted to Vonnegut’s memory, organized by Bo Kinney, an enterprising student at what I stridently persist in calling the University of Washington Library School (when I’m not calling it the ‘iih-school,’ that is). There were critics, authors, journalists, and librarians, each sharing their own take on Vonnegut and what he meant to them. One read from Galapagos, in which Vonnegut envisions our proud and wretched species circa A.D. 1001986, by which time we have evolved into simpler, happier beings with flippers, fur and less hyperactive brains. Another shared how the title character from Vonnegut’s dystopian story Harrison Bergeron (in Welcome to the Monkey House) came to represent different aspects of her evolving self over the years. One elected official shared a passage on the slippery nature of Good and Evil from one of my own favorites, Vonnegut’s inimitable rendition of the spy novel, Mother Night. And to be sure, Slaughterhouse Five was held up as the truly fine and necessary book that it is.

Ultimately, the Vonnegut that was invoked was the avuncular fellow who, in God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, greeted newcomers to Earth with the advice “There’s only one rule that I know of, babies – ‘God damn it, you’ve got to be kind.’” And here lies the key to Kurt Vonnegut, and to why such a diversity of patrons have and will continue to seek him out on our shelves. Kurt Vonnegut strove to be kind. Not nice, but kind – a little word that unpacks into a lot of big ones, such as kinship, compassion, and humility, and a trait he shares with all our most admirable library colleagues, from page to professor. The same fellow who sagely advised, “Please notice when you are happy.”

And so we will continue to buy replacement copies of his books each year, and when seekers come to us asking, “Where’s Kurt?” we shall smile to ourselves as we lead them on beyond Swift and Twain and Voltaire, to the interesting world of a man who knew that life was deeply complicated, and sometimes tragic, and so very, very good.
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