

The Washington Library  
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# Alki



## The State of Reading in Washington

*Inside this Issue:*

Read or Die: Literacy, Citizenship, and the Future...5

Literary Festivals: A Marriage of Interests...12

"Our Job Is to Promote Reading": North Central Regional Library's Mission...14



# The President Speaks

Since this is the first issue of *Alki* in the new year, I'll say, "Happy New Year 2009!" The theme of this issue is *The State of Reading in Washington*. We hope you find the articles in this issue useful and informative.

Statistics show that, as our economy struggles, library users become more dependent than ever on the materials and services that libraries provide. As I write this, legislators on both state and federal levels are laboring to come to agreement on stimulus packages that will jump-start the economy. As an association, we are actively advocating for strong library support on both the federal and state level. We have sent letters to Senators Cantwell and Murray asking them to make sure that public libraries are included in the stimulus package. A list of "shovel ready" projects that was compiled by State Library staff was included with our letters. On a state level, the WLA Legislative Planning Committee is hard at work analyzing bills related to libraries in the state legislature. Our great new one-page WLA fact sheet, titled *Libraries in Tough Economic Times*, provides useful data. The fact sheet is available on the WLA website at <http://wla.org/files/libraries-in-tough-economic-times-1-27-09.pdf>.

As library staff and library supporters, we can continue to improve services even in tough economic times by remaining flexible and smart. We can stay smart by availing ourselves of continuing education opportunities, networking with our peers, staying aware of best practices, and sharing knowledge and concerns. The upcoming Annual Conference is a great place to do all of these things. The theme of the conference is *Impact & Influence*, and it will be held in Spokane at the Red Lion Hotel at the Park on April 15-18. If you haven't already, be sure to check out the conference website at <http://files.wla.org/conferences/wla2009/>. The conference committee has pulled together a great round-up of programs and events, and we look forward to seeing you there.

If you haven't joined WLA, or have forgotten to renew your membership, this is a reminder that we need you to continue to support and advocate for Washington libraries. Our membership year is a calendar year, January through December, so join or renew early to get your full year's worth of benefits. Online membership processing is available at <http://wla.org/membership/>. The Member Services Committee has also recently added a "Get Connected" section under the Membership tab with links to WLA on social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and WebJunction. Check out new ways to get involved. 📖

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*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](mailto:parsonsm@energy.wsu.edu).*



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# Table of Contents

## **Alki** The Washington Library Association Journal

23607 Highway 99, Suite 2-C  
Edmonds, WA 98026  
(425) 967-0739

Email: [washla@wla.org](mailto:washla@wla.org)  
Web: [www.wla.org](http://www.wla.org)

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"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.

*Direct your submission queries to:*  
*Julie Miller*  
Email: [alkieditor@wla.org](mailto:alkieditor@wla.org)

*Alki* was designed by Tammy Reniche, Director of Publications for Melby Cameron & Anderson.



From the Editor.....4

### ***The State of Reading in Washington:***

Read or Die: Literacy, Citizenship, and the Future .....5

*By Michael Cook*

One Book, One Community (Any Size) .....6

*By Erin Krake*

Washington Reads .....7

*By Jan Walsh as told to Carolyn Petersen*

Not Just for Kids: Reaching Adult Comic Readers at Seattle Public Library.....8

*By Abby Bass*

Reading for the Future at Stafford Creek Corrections Center .....9

*By Jill Merritt*

"A Perfect Fit" for the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library .....10

*By Danielle King*

Literary Festivals: A Marriage of Interests.....12

*By Shawn Vestal*

"Our Job Is to Promote Reading": North Central Regional Library's Mission...14

*By Dan Howard and Dean Marney*

Libraries as Heroes: Early Literacy in Washington Libraries.....16

*By Martha Shinnors*

The State of the WASL.....19

*By Debbie Lahue*

Top Ten Books about Reading .....20

*By Nadean Meyer*

Readers' Advisory on the Run.....22

*By Carolyn Petersen*

### ***Solinus:***

Writing Is the New Reading.....24

*By Angelina Benedetti*

### ***WLA Communiqué:***

WLA People and Places .....25

OLE: An Interview with the Co-Chairs of the Outreach and Literacy for

Everyone Interest Group.....27

*By Brian Soneda*

Continuing Education Grants from the Washington State Library .....28

*By Jennifer Fenton*

Save the Date: The PNLA/WLA Conference 2010 in Victoria BC.....29

### ***I'd Rather Be Reading***

Made in Washington.....30

*By David Wright*

*Cover photo provided by Martha Shinnors*

# From the Editor

By Julie Miller

Have you read Rita Dove's poem, "The First Book"? It's one of my favorites, a deceptively short and simple poem about the transformative power of reading. "Open it," Dove writes. "Go ahead, it won't bite./Well, maybe a little."

I am the reader in my family. My parents discouraged me from reading too much as a child, preferring that I experience life in the flesh. But for me, the world experienced through reading was as real as—if not more real than—my backyard. I navigated the swirls and eddies of the muddy Mississippi with Huck and Jim and performed in attic theatrics with the March sisters. Later, Harper Lee taught me about injustice, Flannery O'Connor about danger, and Tennessee Williams about the possibility of redemption. I was lucky to have an appetite for reading, and fine teachers, some of whom were librarians, to guide my tastes.

What is the state of reading in Washington? From early literacy initiatives, to book groups and "big reads," to outreach to special populations, this issue of *Alki* explores the state of reading from the point of view of Washington libraries. In "Read or Die," Michael Cook gives an overview of the latest report from the National Endowment for the Arts on reading trends and their impact. State Librarian Jan Walsh tells the story of the Washington Reads program. Debbie Lahue from ESD 101 describes reading assessment in Washington schools post-WASL.

Sit up straight and take a deep, cleansing breath before starting "Our Job Is to Promote Reading" by Dan Howard and Dean Marney. They are men on a mission to transform the communities served by the North Central Regional Library system. If you think strategic plans and mission statements are mere intellectual exercises, this article will change your mind. Literally.

Have hope: reading lives in Washington. WLA's annual conference will be held in Spokane in April and happens to overlap with *GetLit!*, the annual literary festival sponsored by Eastern Washington University. WLA is partnering with *GetLit!* to bring author Jane Smiley to read during the conference. Shawn Vestal's article "Libraries and Literary Festivals" is a great introduction to *GetLit!*. Solinus and Angelina Benedetti are back, after a brief hiatus, with

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Julie Miller is Associate Dean of Libraries at Eastern Washington University


**“Sit up straight and take a deep, cleansing breath before starting 'Our Job Is to Promote Reading' by Dan Howard and Dean Marney. They are men on a mission.”**



Julie Miller

"Writing Is the New Reading," while David Wright praises (and laments the passing of) Washington's small presses in "Made in Washington."

The ability to understand symbols, to translate characters on a page into language—reading is a powerful act of discovery. Go ahead—open it. "It's not like it's the end of the world," as Rita Dove writes. Just "the world as you think/you know it."

Go to Rita Dove's home page at <http://people.virginia.edu/~rfd4b/> to hear her read "The First Book." 

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# Read or Die: Literacy, Citizenship, and the Future

by Michael Cook

A couple years ago a good friend gave me a small book of library-themed temporary tattoos. My personal favorite? READ OR DIE! *To Read or Not to Read: A Report of National Consequence*, the 2007 report from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) on the state of reading in the United States, pulls no punches to reach a roughly similar conclusion.

Successor to the 2004 NEA report *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading* in America, the 2007 report presents ninety-nine pages documenting the decline of American reading. Organized in three sections that focus on the reading habits of young adults, the impact of those habits on literacy, and the potential consequences, the report forecasts a bleak future for the United States.

## Youth Voluntary Reading Patterns

Simply put, our youth are reading less each year, and they enjoy competing activities more than reading.

Drawing on data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and other research organizations, the report provides evidence for concern about the current reading habits of young Americans. As children grow into adolescents, their voluntary reading rates decline sharply. From 1984 to 2004,

- the percentage of nine-year olds who never or hardly ever read for fun remained roughly constant, dropping slightly from 9% to 8%;
- the percentage of thirteen-year-olds who never or hardly ever read for pleasure increased from 8% to 13%;
- the percentage of seventeen-year-olds who reported they never or hardly ever read for pleasure nearly doubled—from 9% to 19%.<sup>1</sup>

These numbers cannot easily be explained by arguing that more rigorous coursework leaves less time for today's teens to read for pleasure. To *Read or Not to Read* finds that compulsory reading has remained largely constant from 1984 to 2004.<sup>2</sup> Fifty percent of high school seniors are reported to read less than one hour per week for pleasure.<sup>3</sup> The numbers are no better for college students—82% of freshmen and 75% of seniors reported reading 0-4 unassigned books in 2007.<sup>4</sup>

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Michael Cook works at Hanford Technical Library, a research and technical library operated by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. He is also a member of the Alki editorial board.

ALKI • March 2009



**“We can argue all day about the ability of Generation M to absorb what they read with an iPod jammed in their ears—it seems unlikely multiple diversions improve any reader’s ability to absorb and enjoy a literary work.”**

Why is this? TV watching plays a big part. According to data compiled by the NEA, Americans spend about half of their total daily leisure time watching television. In 2006 Americans fifteen years and older spent an average of 2 hours and 21 minutes watching TV. We spend between 20 and 26 minutes each day reading...anything. This statistic includes the time spent reading emails, IM messages, phone texts, blogs, books, magazines, newspapers, and menus.<sup>5</sup> On top of that, 58% of 7th to 12th graders report multitasking while they read.<sup>6</sup> We can

argue all day about the ability of Generation M to absorb what they read with an iPod jammed in their ears. I tend to agree with the NEA report—it seems unlikely multiple diversions improve any reader's ability to absorb and enjoy a literary work.

## What the Declines in Voluntary Reading Mean for Literacy

If we accept that Americans of all ages are reading less, what does the decline mean for literacy in the United States? Based upon the statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Education,

the NEA's 2007 report links reading often and reading well. The correlation between the volume of reading and reading proficiency is thoroughly documented in *To Read or Not to Read*. The report finds that

- For more than thirty years, seventeen-year-olds have not sustained improvements in reading scores.<sup>7</sup>
- Only five percent of high school graduates are proficient readers.<sup>8</sup>
- The gap between male and female high school student reading scores has widened.<sup>9</sup>

These observations for young Americans correspond to findings on adult reading skills and portend a bleak future for adult reading rates and literacy. Here, the report notes that:

- American adults of virtually all education levels are reading less well than in the previous decade.<sup>10</sup>
- The greatest decline in the percentage of proficient readers is occurring at the highest educational levels.<sup>11</sup>

OK, so we're reading less and not understanding much either. Where does that leave us?

*Continued on page 13*

# One Book, One Community (Any Size)

by Erin Krake

Community reading groups have gained great popularity in recent years with initiatives like The Big Read and One Book-One Community programs. These programs aim to get people within a community reading the same book, then coming together through related lectures, discussions, and arts and cultural exhibits that deepen the literary experience.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services. It is meant to address the decline of literary reading in the United States, a trend the NEA identified in *Reading at Risk*, the 2004 report on the subject. This initiative aims to bring reading for pleasure and enlightenment into the center of American culture.

The initiative works through a granting process. Successful applicants choose a title from the list supplied by the program, plan for a specific number of events related to the book, and collaborate with other groups in the community, including libraries. Grant funds are matched at least one to one.

The Big Read has been a big success. The pilot project kicked off in 2006 with ten communities reading four books. By the end of this year, over 400 communities will have hosted a Big Read in their communities.

Predating this more recent initiative is the library-driven One Book, One Community program. One Book programs also promote the reading of one book at the same time by all of the people within a specific community, such as a country, city, county, or campus. And they too offer discussions and activities related to the selected book.

According to the Library of Congress, these community-wide reading programs started in 1998 with the Washington Center for the Book's first "Seattle Reads" program. Seattle Reads is designed to foster reading and discussion of works by authors of diverse cultures and ethnicities. To date, at least twelve of these programs have been done or are

ongoing in the state of Washington, with hundreds more across the nation and world.

The American Library Association offers a free guide to planning a One Book community wide reading group online at <http://publicprograms.ala.org/orc/pdfs/onebookguide.pdf>. Or for about \$100 you can buy a disc that includes digital art, best practices information, and a toolkit.


**“Libraries are natural leaders in the promotion of reading for pleasure and enlightenment in their communities.”**



Small and rural libraries don't have to apply for grants or spend lots of money to support adult reading in their communities. We can still offer that old-fashioned, time-honored, ever-popular program we call "Book Club" for next to nothing.

Here at Roslyn Public Library, we've had an adult book club since 2000. Anyone is free to join in at any time. Membership evolves, but the "club" ever remains. We've had spunky old women reading science fiction and curious young men reading Hunter S. Thompson. Everyone who comes to the monthly discussions has a say in what we choose to read. We gather titles and share them, and then the librarian chooses the new titles for the next six months to one year's schedule.

Because the book club at Roslyn uses interlibrary loans from other libraries, we are limited to titles that are not being held or reserved in great numbers. In other words, we don't choose books that are "hot" at the moment. But, this limitation has its benefits, too, as we read somewhat outside the mainstream and in a great variety of genres. Best of all, we keep the cost of the program to about \$15.00 per month for the whole group.

Libraries are natural leaders in the promotion of reading for pleasure and enlightenment in their communities. Not surprisingly, most libraries in Washington offer community reading groups of one sort or another as a way to do just that. Whether your library applies for a Big Read grant, organizes a One Book program, or offers a monthly book club for adults or teenagers, community-wide reading groups are possible for libraries of every size. 

Erin Krake is Librarian at the Roslyn Public Library, Roslyn, WA.

# Washington Reads

by Jan Walsh as told to Carolyn Petersen

The idea for *Washington Reads*, a statewide program to promote reading for all Washington residents, was born while I was reading *Seaman's Journey* to my granddaughter at a photo shoot at the State Library. *Seaman's Journey* is a book about the dog who accompanied the Lewis and Clark expedition. When the shoot was over, I told my granddaughter that we had to put the book back. "No, Nanna, I want to check it out," was Kayla's response. Kayla and the book had connected, and she wanted to explore the exciting world that that book had opened up to her. At that moment it occurred to me that the Washington State Library should join with other libraries to promote reading, particularly books about Washington, and *Washington Reads* was born.

The first element of *Washington Reads* is a quarterly, themed list of good books about Washington for all ages. In the five years that the program has been in existence, locations such as the Olympic Peninsula, Spokane and the Inland Empire, and Mt. St. Helens have been highlighted. Books with themes such as diversity, disaster, and horror (*Washington Screams*) that were based in Washington have been explored. The lists promote good reads about Washington's native people, tastes of Washington, and the artists. All of the lists can be found at [http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/wa\\_reads/QuarterlyBookList.aspx](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/wa_reads/QuarterlyBookList.aspx).

To promote reading in Washington even further, the State Library began a series of posters with prominent Washington celebrities. Each poster promotes both the Washington State Library and the libraries of Washington. This series has featured Secretary of State Sam Reed and his grandsons; Kasey Kahne, NASCAR driver; Bonnie Dunbar, NASA astronaut and CEO of the Museum of Flight; Miguel Batista, Mariners' pitcher; and Marcus Trufant, Seahawks cornerback, among others.

The State Library has also supported efforts to promote community reading through grant cycles. The 24 One Book grants that were awarded in 2007 assisted libraries in promoting reading in their communities. Another 26 grants were awarded libraries to be implemented in 2008-2009.

The State Library also promotes reading by hosting author events in the reading room. Some of my favorites have been:


- Mary Matsuda Gruenewald who spoke on her book *Looking Like the Enemy: My story of imprisonment in Japanese-American Internment Camps*. She spoke from the heart and the many middle schoolers who were in the audience were entranced.
- The award winning authors Jess Walter (*Citizen Vince*) and Jim Lynch (*Highest Tide*) spoke about their writing and their friendship.
- Jack Hamann's book, *On American Soil: How Justice Became a*

*Casualty in World War II*, spoke about the African American soldiers who were wrongly accused of the murder of an Italian POW at Ft. Lawton in Seattle. The army recently apologized, and the soldiers were given honorable discharges.

- Linda Hunt's book, *Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk across Victorian America*, chronicled the trek a Norwegian immigrant mother and daughter undertook to save their Spokane area home in 1896.
- Vivian and Phil Williams performed tunes from *Fiddling Down the Oregon Trail* and the songs the audience heard connected them to the past in a unique way.

As I began with a personal story, I will end with one as well. In 2008 I found myself on the field at the Mariner's opening day game with Miguel Batista, Mariners' pitcher, a life-sized poster of Miguel promoting reading on the Spring 2008 *Washington Reads* poster, and one of our *Letters about Literature* champions. As an author and a Mariner, Miguel brought strength to our reading promotion. Also, our involvement with opening day ceremonies emphasized the importance of reading and libraries to the sold-out crowd in the stands and to the television audience. The publicity that resulted from that exposure increased hits on our website even before the ceremony began.

While all that coverage was wonderful, the best part of that day involved Alayna Chamberland, a Washington *Letters about Literature* award winner. (*Letters about Literature* is a national program that encourages young readers to write letters to the authors of a book they have read describing how that book has spoken to issues in their life, and the State Library sponsors it in Washington.) Alayna, a ninth grader at Capital High School in Olympia, wrote to Wally Lamb about his book *She's Come Undone*; her letter told of how his book helped her deal with her father's terminal illness. She was honored that day, and as she walked off the field, her cell phone rang. Her parents had seen her on TV and were overjoyed and incredibly proud. Alayna's father passed away just days later. When later Alayna received her award from Secretary of State Sam Reed at a ceremony at the Capitol, she dedicated the award to her late dad.

Making a personal connection to a book is the bottom line for me. Libraries frequently are the venue where the connection happens, and Washington libraries should be the catalyst for connections to lifelong reading. It has been a joy for me and the staff of the Washington State Library to assist in promoting reading in our state. 

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Jan Walsh is Washington's State Librarian

# Not Just for Kids: Reaching Adult Comics Readers at Seattle Public Library

by Abby Bass

Comics and their adult readers have long suffered from a major image problem in the United States. For decades, American book critics, booksellers, publishers, and yes, even librarians viewed comics as vulgar, juvenile entertainment. Adults who read comics were often stereotyped as immature, obsessive, and nerdy males (think of the Comic Book Guy from *The Simpsons*, for example). Thankfully, these negative perceptions have begun to erode over the past decade, as the scope of the comics medium and its adult audience has broadened considerably. Major publishers like Random House now have divisions dedicated to graphic novels (comics bound and published like traditional books), the *New York Times Book Review* regularly reviews comics, and bookstores and libraries around the country have developed impressive comics, graphic novels, and *manga* (Japanese comics) sections.

Although many librarians embrace and promote comics in their collections and communities, certain stereotypes about comics readership persist in the library world. Most of the professional literature focuses on comics as a medium for children and teenagers and as a tool to reach reluctant readers. Many teens and children enjoy reading comics, and promoting comics in your collections can be a useful strategy for encouraging reluctant readers. However, this narrow perspective ignores the many adults who have always been avid comics fans and the growing number of adult readers who are only now discovering comics through the increasing popularity of graphic novels.

At Seattle Public Library (SPL), librarians across the system are endeavoring to better serve these often overlooked readers. Through enhancements to collections, programming, and readers' advisory, SPL librarians support adult comics readers and promote this medium to new audiences.

## Collections

At SPL, almost all comics are cataloged in the 740s decade of the Dewey Decimal system. For the past three years, this decade has had the second highest circulation of all adult nonfiction system-wide, due in large part to the growing popularity of comics and graphic novels. In response to the increasing circulation numbers and a number of other factors, SPL Collection Services has steadily increased the number and variety of comics cataloged as adult in SPL collections. These improvements have not gone unnoticed by our patrons. I have talked to many adult comics readers in Seattle who have been thrilled to see the collection grow in breadth and depth over the last few years. One patron remarked that he was saving much more time and money now that he could find desired titles at his local library

## Programs

Seattle Public librarians have promoted comics to adult audiences through a mix of one-time events and regular programming. One of the first major SPL programs to highlight comics for adults was Seattle Reads, the annual citywide reading series sponsored by the Washington Center for the Book at the Seattle Public Library. Over the course of a month, everyone in Seattle is invited to read a featured title and attend related book groups, film screenings, panel discussions, author readings and other events. In 2006, the Seattle Reads selection was *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, a memoir of



Photo by Max Cloufelter

**Local cartoonist and educator David Lasky giving a slideshow presentation about Northwest comics artists at the Ballard Library. This was the kick-off event for this year's Comixtravaganza II. More than 70 people attended**

growing up in revolutionary Iran that the author wrote and illustrated in comics format. Included in the "toolbox" that was distributed with copies of the book was a section on the recent history of comics and graphic novels, instructions on how to read comics, and a list of further graphic novels to read after *Persepolis*. (The section of the *Persepolis* toolbox about graphic novels can be viewed at [http://www.spl.org/pdfs/satrapiToolbox\\_3.pdf](http://www.spl.org/pdfs/satrapiToolbox_3.pdf).) This program raised the profile of comics among adult Seattle readers and introduced many to a new literary and artistic format.

With the success of *Persepolis* as a discussion book, some Seattle Public librarians have begun to use other graphic novels in their book groups. I talked to two librarians in the Fiction Department at the Central Library who have discussed Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* as well as *Persepolis* with their book groups. Although they encountered some resistance to the unusual format at first, both librarians found that the titles generated rich and rewarding discussions.

Another highly successful comics program was last year's Comixtravaganza, a system-wide series of all-ages events celebrating comics, graphic novels, *manga*, and artists. The brainchild of Teen Services librarian Hayden Bass, this month-long program started out in several branches with comics drawing contests, cartoon screenings, and other events, and ended at the Central Library with a day-long event that included a comics workshop, a panel discussion featuring local cartoonists and educators, and a multimedia presentation by local comics luminary Ellen Forney (author of *I Love Led Zeppelin* and illustrator for Sherman Alexie's award-winning YA novel *The Adventures of a Part-Time Indian*). Nearly 600 people attended the six events, with 455 at the Central finale. Almost 60% of the Central attendees were 21 and older. The large, intergenerational audiences at the Comixtravaganza events demonstrated the hunger for this kind of programming among adults as well as children and teens. At the time of this writing, Comixtravaganza II is currently underway, and so far, the events appear to be as well attended as last year's.

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Abby Bass is a teen services librarian at Seattle Public Library.

Continued on page 11

# Reading for the Future at Stafford Creek Corrections

by Jill Merritt

Imagine sitting alone in a cell at the county jail. A volunteer pushing a cart hands a book through the bars. Imagine you have never read a book for yourself, one not required by a teacher. You get lucky. You open it.

The library at Stafford Creek Corrections Center, like other prison libraries, offers inmates a range of resources to meet their information needs. The library provides a chance to explore other worlds, to get information about subjects that are important to them, to connect to the outside world, and, most importantly, to find answers they need to succeed with their plans for the future.

Like any community of readers, prisoners have a broad range of reading interests. Fiction blends reality with imagination in a way that makes spending time in prison endurable. Some of the most popular reading at Stafford Creek is young adult fiction, especially fantasy. (Because the average reading level among our inmates is ninth grade, we include young adult materials in our selections.) Inmates at Stafford Creek escape into the fantasy worlds of Terry Brooks, Stephanie Meyer, R.A. Salvatore, and many more.

Graphic novels and *manga* offer a visual exploration of fantasy worlds with wonderful artwork and great stories, while westerns allow them to be the heroes of the Old West, a world that is totally foreign but romantic. Through urban novels, many inmates find a familiar place—the world of the streets—and embrace the characters, heroes or villains. Other inmates read picture books and children's literature along with their children to keep in touch with their young world.

Non-fiction offers intellectual stimulation for many of the inmates. Art books, drawing, and crafts are only part of the draw to the non-fiction collection; many also read history, religion, self-help, parenting, resume building, health, cooking, sports, biographies, computer books, and (the ever popular) true crime. No reading material is taboo for the inmates at Stafford Creek, although we have some limitations based on safety concerns within the institution. You won't find how to make a bomb on the prison library shelf, but you will find how to repair a car or to build bookshelves.

Education is important to the incarcerated—essential for those who wish to make a better life in the outside world. Libraries play an important educational role. By working collaboratively with the education department, the library at Stafford Creek provides great reading material to supplement educational programs such as auto repair, computer skills, wood working, and welding. The library is also an important resource for basic literacy and education. According to the *State of Washington Adult Literacy Education Study* published by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in 2008, 30.8% of inmates entering prison in Washington do so without the benefit of a GED or high school diploma or even basic reading skills. The library can be a great resource for improving literacy, with books on learning to read as well as books at every reading level.

Many inmates hope to lead normal, everyday lives when they leave prison.

*Jill Merritt is Library Associate at Stafford Creek Corrections Center in Aberdeen, WA.*

The library links them to the outside world. Local newspapers offer the news of their home towns; popular magazines keep them up on celebrity gossip, technology, and social trends, especially the music that is so much a part of everyday life. These resources keep them up to date with American culture.

The library also strives to provide the best possible resources for them to re-enter that world. Because library staff gather information from and about social organizations in Washington that assist people with housing, food, clothing, job skills, education, and employment, we provide a valuable resource for the inmates to make positive connections once outside and to begin their route back to society.

Inmates use the library at Stafford Creek Corrections Center because they want to be there; they are not required to come to the library. They find that it can be a safe place. Inmates often show their respect for the library by donating books, CDs, and magazines to the collection and sharing their interests with others. The library offers a freedom that is hard to come by while living behind the walls, fences, and razor wire. 📖

## Reference

Washington State Institute for Public Policy. (2008). *State of Washington adult literacy education study*. Seattle: Berk & Associates.



Library users at Stafford Creek Corrections Center.



Photos by Jill Merritt

# "A Perfect Fit" for the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library

by Danielle King

On July 1, 2008, the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL) transitioned from administration by contract with the Seattle Public Library (SPL) to direct administration by the Washington State Library and the Office of the Secretary of State. From a patron perspective, the transition was seamless. All activities of the library continued normally, and no operations or programs were suspended. So, what is different? The administration makes more sense—WTBBL is a state-wide program now being administered by a state agency. Staffing changes occurred, as the staff had the option of staying with SPL or continuing with WTBBL as a state employee. Half the staff is new; during the months prior to the transition, eleven new staff were hired. The “new” staff and the “old” staff have come together incredibly well as a great team, sharing historical knowledge and new ideas. WTBBL currently has 22 staff members, including an information technology technician who reports directly to the Office of the Secretary of State.

Becoming a program of the Washington State Library has dramatically helped outreach efforts. Making people in the state aware of our services is critical to the overall success of the WTBBL program. The Library Development Program staff at WSL has taken the time to learn about WTBBL and promote our services as they travel around the state. WTBBL also feels a great deal of support and interest from all divisions at the Office of the Secretary of State. The new administration is a perfect fit, and WTBBL looks forward to improving and increasing our services throughout the state.

## WTBBL Users

Since July 1, 727 new patrons have established service with WTBBL. Our services are open to all Washingtonians who are standard print-impaired. We have an active patron base of approximately 10,000 people; the number grows when it includes interlibrary loan patrons, deposit collections, and infrequent borrowers. We circulate approximately 2,000 books a day, and our annual circulation for fiscal year 2008 was 454,182 items.

Our patrons are avid readers; our circulation per capita is 50.76. Compared to the national average of 8.39 and the Washington State average of 9.88, you can appreciate just how much WTBBL patrons read. Our patrons are largely adults with 59% over the age of 65, including 87 centenarians: 76 women and eleven men. Only 5.9% of WTBBL patrons are 17 years of age or younger. However, they are active readers, and we have a very strong youth services department that coordinates a rich summer reading program.

## Collections and Services

In a recent patron survey, the library asked patrons the subject matter of reading materials they would be most interested in receiving, having the library produce, or have featured as library programming. Responses were interesting, with health (44% of respondents) and travel (42%), and memoir writing (28%) being the top categories. The most

“Our patrons are avid readers; our circulation per capita is 50.76.”

popular write-in category of interest was health, with specific topics including cancer, diabetes, and eye conditions. Other popular write-in requests included nutrition, history, science, and current events.

WTBBL uses a system of “interest codes” rather than subject headings to classify books for our patrons. Interest codes are applied to books and then patron profiles are created based on inclusion or exclusion of interest codes. For example, I may select science fiction and fantasy but exclude sexually explicit and strong language. These codes become the basis for my profile, and our circulation system (Keystone Library Automation Systems) then selects books for me based on my preferences and exclusions. The top ten interest codes subscribed to by patrons are: 1) Mysteries; 2) Gentle or nostalgic fiction; 3) Adventure (fiction); 4) Westerns; 5) Animal stories; 6) Biography; 7) Adventure (non-fiction); 8) Love stories & romance (fiction); 9) Mysteries & crime, best sellers; and 10) Travel. The majority of our patrons (70.8%) are on nightly auto select. This user-focused approach to classification allows our patrons to have more power over their book choices, even when they are auto selected.

The majority of the WTBBL collection is provided to us by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS). However, WTBBL supplements the collection by producing our own materials in audio and braille formats. Our librarians select books to be recorded or transcribed based on recommendations from staff and patrons. We focus our production on local materials: books that are set in the Pacific Northwest or books by Northwest authors. Our Braille Department produces about 35 books a year, and our current collection of locally produced braille books numbers 1,034 titles. The Audio Book Production Department digitally records approximately 250 titles per year. The collection of locally produced audio books is 1,889 titles, with many more currently in production. Both the Braille Department and the Audio Book Production Department rely heavily on volunteers for the transcription, narration, and editing of materials.

Our most popular format, audio cassettes, represents 77% of our circulation. Audio books also represent the bulk of our collection, with 54,840 titles. The audio books are unique in that they are currently on cassettes using four-track technologies and require the use of a special cassette player. This technology allows us to limit use to only eligible patrons and, under a special provision of the U.S. copyright law, to produce books in braille and in audio formats. This spring, we expect the first batch of the new digital talking book machines and digital talking books. The new players and books use flash drives, allowing an entire book to fit on one cartridge. The player is smaller and significantly lighter than the audio cassette player. Priority for distribution of the machines will be given to veterans, then centenarians, then through a lottery.

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Danielle King is Program Manager at the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library.

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WTBBL's large print collection is also popular at 9.7% of total circulation. The Evergreen Radio Reading Service is next, with 6.5% of our patrons subscribed and listening on either the Internet or with a radio receiver. Braille circulation comes in at 5.4% and is represented in our collection by 15,793 titles. Digital downloads through the NLS site by WTBBL patrons represent 1.4% of our total circulation.

WTBBL is working toward having our locally produced audio books available for download from our website, and we currently do have web braille titles available for download. The NLS recently launched a program called BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) that allows eligible patrons to download thousands of books via a personal computer to an approved audio book device. The popularity of the digital download is increasing as more books become available and more people have access to high-speed internet, computers, and required devices. WTBBL currently has 140 patrons participating in the download program and in the last year they have downloaded an amazing 5,391 books.

The Evergreen Radio Reading Service (ERRS) is a 24/7 radio station that can be seen roughly as WTBBL's "periodicals department." ERRS is streaming live on the web and is broadcast on the sub-streams of the radio airwaves around the state. The programming on the ERRS is rich with locally produced shows and supplemented by national programs such as the reading of the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. The wealth of talented volunteers in the ERRS produces a myriad of programming, including a live, weekly call in talk show, live daily reading of the Seattle Times and Seattle PI, literary news programs and author interviews, science fiction hour, programs on animals and the environment, and much, much more.

### **WTBBL Volunteers**

Throughout the various WTBBL departments, volunteers keep us going. Approximately 400 volunteers at WTBBL contribute 32,000 hours annually, for an equivalent of 15 full-time employees. Many of our volunteers have been with the library for decades and take time out of their days to give to our patrons. Volunteers come in as early as 6:30 a.m. to read the news on the radio and narrate audio books. Some come in after they have already worked a full day at their job and contribute to radio programming, audio book production, braille transcription, braille proofreading, administrative tasks, cataloging assistance, and book inspection. The dedication of the volunteers allows us to provide the best service to our patrons, so that the visually impaired, physically disabled, and learning disabled have access to our books and materials.

As demonstrated by circulation per capita, WTBBL patrons are reading, and they are reading a lot. Our challenge, post-transition, is to keep up the incredible momentum of this very special library and serve more print-impaired Washington residents. Some surveys estimate that the number of people eligible for our service in the State of Washington is as high as 180,000. Clearly, many of them either don't know about our services or aren't using us for some reason. Organizations such as ours often suffer due to a lack of understanding or a wish to not "give in" to loss of vision or blindness by potential patrons. However, our patrons write us daily to tell us how much freedom and joy they receive from our services. We have lots of work to do, but with the great team we have, the efforts of our patrons and volunteers, and the support and infrastructure of the Washington State Library and the Office of the Secretary of State, we are poised to be leaders in library services to the print-impaired. 

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## **Not Just For Kids** *Continued from page 8*

### **Readers' Advisory**

At SPL, adult readers' advisory with comics encompasses a broad range of practices, from creating eye-catching displays to blog posts to personalized reading lists. In our system, comics cataloged adult do not have their own separate section like children's and teen comics. Since they are tucked away in the Dewey run with little to no signage in most libraries, these books are often overlooked by patrons who don't already know the call numbers. When adult comics are put on display, however, they jump off the shelves faster than you can say "Holy circ stats, Batman!" This "passive" readers' advisory approach enables SPL librarians to draw attention to these hard-to-find collections and to reach readers who are not approaching the desk for help.

More "active" readers' advisory with graphic novels comes in the form of staff-created content, such as blog posts and book lists, and traditional readers' advisory activities, such as interviews and personalized reading lists. On

the ShelfTalk blog, SPL's blog for adults, SPL staff members have reviewed graphic novels and highlighted SPL's comics collections and related events. In the past year, I created an annotated book list of "Great Graphic Novels for Adults" which highlights thirty graphic novels in a variety of genres. This list is available as a printed brochure and on SPL's website.

Many of you may already have similar practices in place at your libraries, and I salute your efforts. I hope I have given you some new ideas about how to reach current and future adult comics readers in your communities. By promoting comics to adults as well as kids and teens, you make these readers feel welcome in your libraries, help combat stereotypes about comics and their readers, and expand awareness of a rapidly evolving literary and artistic medium among your adult patrons. These worthy pursuits all tie directly back to the library's core goals of promoting reading for pleasure and supporting lifelong learning. 

# Literary Festivals and Libraries: A Marriage of Interests

by Shawn Vestal

It's a perfect marriage of interests: the names on the program at *Get Lit!* are the same names on books shelved in your libraries.

Jane Smiley, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *A Thousand Acres* and, most recently, *Ten Days in the Hills*. Simon Armitage, a British poet considered a contender to become that country's poet laureate. Charles Baxter, the novelist and National Book Award nominee. David Suzuki, the Canadian author, broadcaster and environmental activist.

And many more.

*Get Lit!*—the Northwest's best festival for readers and writers—has teamed up with the Washington Library Association to bring Smiley to Spokane on April 16. It's the sort of collaboration that offers a promising model for libraries, universities, and others interested in fostering literary life in their communities in an era of tightening budgets and changing reading habits.

"It was crucial to be able to pool our resources, especially this year, with the economy the way it is," said Danielle Ringwald, *Get Lit!* program coordinator at Eastern Washington University.

*Get Lit!* runs from April 10-19, overlapping with the WLA annual conference. That means there's an opportunity for library conference participants to enjoy the festival and to be inspired to form literary partnerships in their own communities. The majority of the WLA conference wraps up on Friday, April 17, the day after Smiley's appearance. But *Get Lit!* rolls on through Sunday, with speakers, panel discussions, and workshops.

Ringwald said that WLA members ought to think about extending their stay in Spokane to see the kind of impact the eleven-year-old literary festival has had on the community—from people with an intense interest in poetry, to fans of fiction or non-fiction, to the children and teens in the festival workshops, busy becoming tomorrow's generation of readers and writers.

"It creates excitement and buzz around reading and writing, which is important," she said.

More and more libraries are participating in literary festivals, sometimes acting as the central sponsor and sometimes teaming up with others. From Chicago to Toledo, libraries are organizing reading festivals that raise the profile of reading in their communities, according to an article by Beth Dempsey in the Feb. 15, 2005 issue of *Library Journal*.

The Missoula Public Library, for example, helps put on the Montana Festival of the Book. In Bowling Green, Kentucky, the public library, local university, and a private book store have collaborated to create the Southern Kentucky Book Fest. In that case, organizers have targeted a culture that has placed little value on books and reading—around a



quarter of residents in the area owned no books, according to Dempsey. In the decade since the festival started, it's grown to attract around 10,000 people a year.

Closer to home, the Washington State Library has participated in the National Book Festival since 2003 as part of its Washington Reads program. The State Library selects a book set in Washington for the annual event. Last year's selection was *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie—who has also appeared at several *Get Lit!* festivals.

"Literary festivals offer a unique proposition to libraries: host one, bring the reading public up-close and personal with writers of all kinds, and you will bask in the glory of that connection," Dempsey writes. "Indeed, festivals can be the pathway for libraries to 'own' the literary niche in their community."

In Spokane, *Get Lit!* began laying claim to that niche in 1998, the brainstorm of a handful of regional writers who were downcast after a particularly poorly attended reading. Christine Holbert, who later started Lost Horse Press, and Scott Poole, then the head of EWU Press, helped start the first festival, along with help from EWU professor and poet Christopher Howell.

The first festival was a one-day affair, with readings from 11 a.m. to midnight. The roster included Denis Johnson—who would later win the National Book Award for *Tree of Smoke*—along with many other writers familiar to readers in the Northwest and around the country: novelist and memoirist Kim Barnes, poet Robert Wrigley, novelist and EWU professor Gregory Spatz, and others.

"It was kind of a marathon: 'How much literature can you stand?'" said Dennis Held, a poet who read at that first festival and now a teacher in Authors Tour, one of *Get Lit!*'s educational outreach programs. The scope was limited, and the crowds were small. But the seed was planted. "It was really a labor of love," said Ringwald. "From there, it grew into several venues. It grew into a week-long event. It grew to include kids' events."

Year by year, the festival expanded. By 2004, the lineup included luminaries such as Kurt Vonnegut, Dave Barry, Sarah Vowell, and Garrison Keillor—and some 10,000 people participated in the festivities.

Today, *Get Lit!* lasts a full week, and listing all the events is a daunting task. Top-flight national and regional authors and EWU grad students read their work. Some of the country's best poets show up. Workshops are held for kids and teens. Events are spread throughout the area. Students read from atop milk crates in downtown Spokane. Authors read for audiences in the historic Bing Crosby Theater, in art galleries, coffee-houses, libraries, and other locations all around Spokane. The festival has educational outreach programs, as well, which send writers into schools in the region year-round.

Held said that the expansion of the festival into all corners of the com-

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Shawn Vestal is a journalist and graduate of the MFA program at Eastern Washington University.


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munity has been an important development. As someone who grew up in rural, hardscrabble conditions, he said he found a kind of lifeline in books and reading—and he tries to offer that same lifeline to the students he teaches now. “As somebody who was there at the first one, I can tell you that *Get Lit!* has changed dramatically and changed for the better,” he said. Among the writers who have graced a *Get Lit!* stage over the years are Robert Bly, James Crumley, Rita Dove, Tim Egan, David Guterson, William Kittredge, Yusef Komunyakaa, Jonathan Lethem, Patrick McManus, Walter Mosley, Harvey Pekar, Marilynne Robinson, Salman Rushdie, David Sedaris, and Jess Walter.

This year, the festival is adding the appearance of a graphic novelist, workshops on screenwriting and playwriting, and a discussion of an online novel. “We’re trying to do things that are out of the box,” Ringwald said.



It takes time and effort, and often years, to build a literary festival into a central community event. But proponents of such collaborations say it’s worth it—strengthening the community of readers served by the library and fostering relationships between the readers, authors, publishers, libraries, and their community partners.

For more information about *Get Lit!*, go to <http://www.ewu.edu/getlit> or <http://getlitprograms.blogspot.com>. 

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## Read or Die Continued from page 5

### Why More than Reading Is at Risk

*To Read or Not to Read* suggests that reduced reading levels and the associated declines in adult literacy have dire implications for American society. Drawing on data from The Conference Board, the College Entrance Examination Board, and the U.S. Department of Education Center for Education Statistics, the report shows the impact of declining literacy on employment:

- Employers now rank reading and writing as top deficiencies for new hires.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2006 more than 80% of high school graduates, 46% of two-year college graduates, and 26% of four-year college graduates were rated deficient in basic writing skills by their employers.<sup>13</sup>

The National Commission on Writing estimates that state agencies spend \$221 million dollars annually on writing training for their employees. Large corporations are estimated to spend \$3.1 billion on similar training each year. It is no real stretch to imagine these funds might be better spent on education and innovative industrial research and development.

*To Read or Not to Read* concludes with the NEA’s most controversial observations. Though a qualifier is carefully inserted—that none of the cited data directly show cause and effect—the authors state:

1. Good readers play key roles in the enrichment of American cultural and civic life.
2. Good readers make good citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Citing a 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) performed by the U.S. Census Bureau, the report concludes that literary readers participate in civic and cultural activities at much higher rates than do non-literary readers. In fact, literary readers are shown to be 31% more likely to visit an art museum, 32% more likely to exercise...even 17% more likely to attend a sporting event.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the report observes that literary readers are twice as likely to perform charity work. These observations tie the report findings in a neat little bow—our youth and adults are reading less, therefore they are less literate, more costly to employ, and less likely to make a positive social impact.


### Reactions

Reactions to the 2007 NEA report have ranged from dismissal and outright snarky-ness to acceptance and calls for action. An excellent resource for balanced discussion of *To Read or Not To Read* may be found in a symposium published by *Academic Questions* in June 2008. Entitled “*To Read or Not To Read: Responses to the New NEA Study*,” this overview presents a thoughtful consideration of the NEA’s 2007 findings.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the conflicting responses to the NEA report, librarians, educators, and others have stepped up to help reverse the trends documented in *To Read or Not Read*. Library Journal recently reported that after over two decades of decline, literary reading rates rose 3.5 % in 2008.<sup>17</sup> The rise in reading rates has been attributed to One Book, One City programs and others like it around the country. Perhaps reading isn’t quite dead yet.

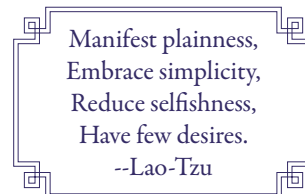
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# “Our Job Is to Promote Reading”: North Central Regional Library’s Mission

by Dan Howard and Dean Marney



Our job is to promote reading and lifelong learning. Call us the new traditionalists. You could call us reading evangelicals or even reading fundamentalists. Whatever you call us, including nuts, we are definitely people of the book. We love books and through an awakening have come to believe that the primary role of public libraries is to promote reading. Dan is an analyzer who looks at problems from infinite angles and volumes of data. Dean likes to solve problems by increasing choices. Neither of these approaches usually leads to simplicity. However, this time it did.

## A New Mission

Here is an easy test of whether your library’s mission statement has value: ask your colleagues to recite your mission or they have to shave their heads. At an all-staff event several years ago we asked the group what our mission was. No one, that is zero staff, could repeat it. There was a chocolate prize involved, so someone finally got a library manual and answered the question.

Over ten years ago the North Central Regional Library (NCRL) made a change toward simplicity in our mission statement that continues to affect everything we do. We had SPFS, Strategic Planning Fatigue Syndrome. We were exhausted of role-playing and asking people who didn’t know or didn’t care what they thought we should be doing. Our old mission didn’t make us missionaries. It was too long, too complicated, and had some vague language about the library being the community’s portal to information—yawn. It said nothing about books or reading and most importantly, it wasn’t compelling to the staff. We were ready to drop our boring, passive mission, get our self-esteem back, and stop being society’s doormat to information. We were also manic enough to think we could have a mission statement that everyone could recognize and be excited about.

The miracle question was, what if we took our responsibility for public education as stated in the RCW 27.12.025 seriously? We began the planning process and started talking. We talked a lot. We starting talking among ourselves, and then, like most traditional planning processes, we asked others what they thought the library should be doing. This time, however, we spent way more time talking to educators of all kinds and levels. We also read a lot. We even fought a little.

Ultimately we had a self-assessment that included what others and we felt the library did better than everyone else. Like the findings in the recent OCLC report *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources*, people thought of us as the book place and the book people. We affirmed that we already had an excellent product and a unique position to make an impact in our five counties and 28 cities and towns. Our mission became to promote reading and lifelong learning.

Then the real fun started. Change your mission and you change your

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Dan Howard is Director of Public Services at North Central Regional Library. Dean Marney is the Director at North Central Regional Library.

culture. Suddenly the entire staff was talking about whether programs fit our mission. New phrases like “mission drift” entered our vocabulary. It was time to practice hurdling. We had to face our internal and external obstacles to promoting reading and lifelong learning. Our number one hurdle was to persuade our staff to embrace their new identity as educators. Simplicity is a crazy thing. Through trial and error, we learned that educators are made through education. Our training budget also simply tripled.

## The “NCRL Way”: Using a Common Language and Core Competencies

We first adopted a curriculum that gave us a common language to talk about pre-reading skills with each other, school personnel, and parents. We adopted “Every Child Ready to Read @ your library” as our curriculum and reading mother tongue. After lots of training, our librarians were including “Every Child Ready to Read @ your library” concepts into all our story time programs. We continue to retrain all staff annually on “Every Child Ready to Read” and now incorporate pre-reading skills in everything we do with kids—including games and crafts. All branch staff and volunteers are trained to do story times the “NCRL way” that builds in the six pre-reading skills. Now we consistently and noticeably fill an important educational role in our communities doing something that no other organization is doing—teaching early literacy skills to young children.

Booktalking is a core competency for all of our public services employees. We want everyone who works for us to be able to share their enthusiasm for books they love through booktalking. It is no accident that Nancy Pearl is considered to be America’s Librarian. Book lovers love to read, but they also love to talk about what they have read. Employees and volunteers are trained to do booktalks the NCRL way (we call it basic sales training), and they are expected to do book talks for class visits to the library and when we visit schools.

We learned about social marketing and acquired a whole new vocabulary for promoting reading. Social marketing involves applying traditional marketing concepts to influence behavior for the betterment of society. It’s marketing applied to social behaviors. Most of us are familiar with social marketing campaigns that attempt to encourage people to wear seatbelts or reduce drunk driving. We use the same concepts to shape our programs and services. After lots of training, social marketing has become a core competency for our managers because of its demonstrated effectiveness to influence behavior.

How do you know if what you are doing is working? We realized we had to measure our successes and failures, and we had to plan and adjust more quickly to meet our objectives. We jumped into using the balanced scorecard as our strategic planning tool. The balanced scorecard isn’t magic, but it almost is. It’s a business-based strategic planning model that emphasizes performance measurement. What gets measured gets managed, and we

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**“ With 272 active book discussion groups in five counties, we think we have more book clubs per capita than anywhere in the state. ”**

use our scorecard to watch ourselves change. We use it to develop objectives, set targets, and measure our results. The key to making this process work is asking, “How does this objective advance our ability to promote reading?”

### Taking Reading to the People

We made a gigantic shift when we realized that outreach meant “not at the library.” This concept was harder for some of us (Dean) than others, but resulted in some of our greatest successes. We started reaching out to schools by sponsoring One Book author visits at their venue—not at the public library. We flooded the schools with copies of the book, and they got read. As a result of our new relationship with the schools, last year we held a One Book event with Sherman Alexie at the Wenatchee Convention Center, and this time they came to us. The event drew over 800 people from throughout our district, some driving more than 150 miles and three hours, including full school buses from Omak, Republic, and Waterville.


We boosted our Spanish/English bilingual “Library Lady” to full-time outreach. She now rarely sets foot in our branches and instead visits daycares, preschools, and migrant education facilities providing books, telling stories, and teaching pre-reading skills. She’s promoting reading to a whole new generation growing up bilingual.

Last year we added a bookmobile that visits nine rural schools in communities that don’t have a branch library. Bookmobiles have been around for over one hundred years now, and many libraries are getting out of the bookmobile business. As new traditionalists, we’re getting back into them. With only 28 branches to cover about 15,000 square miles, many of our kids live too far from a library. We want children in rural areas to have a public library experience, and we’re bringing it to them.

What did we do to promote reading to adults? One of the ways is that we created a position to serve our adult book discussion groups. We made the decision to provide book groups with whatever books they wanted when they wanted them. We now have 272 active book discussion groups in our five counties. We think we have more book clubs per capita than anywhere in the state.

We set a goal of having zero holds for high-demand books and are meeting that goal. We work hard to maintain a holds-to-copy ratio not greater than two to one. It made sense to capture our customers with a bestseller when they are motivated to read. When you can’t meet demand immediately, you’re missing opportunities and losing readers.

The end result of changing our mission to a focus on reading is that we have a newfound passion for what we do. We’re also having a lot more fun. Ask any of the staff at NCRL what their mission is and they can tell you—chocolate incentive is optional. They can also teach you how to ready your child for reading and will recommend a great book. We still have a long way to go and many changes to embrace, but we know who we are and what our job is. Now that is the beauty of simplicity.

*For more information about social marketing, attend the Hot! Naked! Social Marketing session with Dan Howard and Dean Marney at the WLA 2009 annual conference in Spokane.* 



**Moms and preschoolers get ready to read at an NCRL program.**



**Kids make book selections aboard the NCRL bookmobile.**



**Members of an NCRL book club enjoy a little wine and fiction.**

# Libraries as Heroes: Early Literacy in Washington Libraries

by Martha Shinnors

*We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.*" –Fred Rogers<sup>1</sup>

I've always admired Fred Rogers, his gentle voice and passionate commitment to children. And I've always admired libraries for the same reason. Libraries have a history of seeing and responding to need. In Washington support for early learning has created an incredible synergy as libraries connect with community partners to expand services, materials, outreach, and specialized programs. Librarians embraced the brain research of the early 1990's and have been engaged learners and change agents for early literacy ever since. In the face of a turbulent economy and funding, I predict that libraries will find innovative ways to remain integral partners in their local communities.

## Looking Back

Washington State Library's first major support for early literacy began with an LSTA-funded Early Learning Initiative (2000-2003) which pumped over \$776,000 into training, collections and demonstration projects. Five workshops were offered in 2000 to support librarians as they incorporated the early learning brain research into their programs and partnered with other community groups in library programs and services.

In 2001, core collections of over 300 books, tapes, and professional materials targeted to babies and toddlers were awarded to 31 libraries. Training on story times and community collaboration was included as a condition of the grant.

Thirteen early learning demonstration grants were awarded in 2001 and 2002, with a requirement to include partnering with local community agencies in the development and implementation of the projects.

Highlights of the demonstration project, visible in libraries across the state today, include the following outreach and service initiatives:

## Outreach

- story breaks in public waiting rooms, a place where families and young children spend a lot of time waiting
- multilingual story times at Head Start/ECEAP centers and community libraries
- vans to provide mobile early-learning programs, information, resources and services—a public relations tool in the form of a traveling billboard Education
- training to educate parents/caregivers, childcare providers, and the community
- family literacy programs that promote reading as an important shared activity for all family members
- parenting materials and information pieces for childcare providers

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Martha Shinnors is Youth Services Consultant at the Washington State Library.

## Services

- bilingual kits containing children's print and audio resources and early learning facts
- lending collections library for childcare centers and preschools of rotating theme-based bins containing books, videos, and early learning manipulative toys
- needs assessments, a monthly newsletter for the target population, guest readers/storytellers to supplement current activities

A wonderful example of a project expansion is the *Read to Your Baby* booklet developed by the Pierce County Library System (PCLS) Youth Services Department as a part of their 2001 demonstration grant. The booklet stresses the importance of parents' and caregivers' interaction in the first years of a baby's life. When the grant cycle ended, the State Library had the booklet printed in Spanish and a year later translated into Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. After printing, it was distributed to libraries for them to share with local early-learning partners. Using funds from the Allen Foundation, the English version of the booklet was revised in 2008 to include the six skills from the ALA *Every Child Ready to Read*. To date, over 390,000 copies have been distributed to groups around the state that work with young children and families.



Photos provided by Martha Shinnors

## Every Child Ready to Read

A Paul G. Allen Family Foundation early literacy grant (2005-2007) to the Washington State Library provided regional training in the *Every Child Ready to Read* program at 21 public libraries in 2006 and 11 partnered workshops in 2007. The training reached 742 library and community partner staff members.

Comprehensive resource collections were sent to over 100 migrant, tribal, and AmeriCorps/Vista sites, greatly extending the scope of the project. A total of 138 child care providers received STARS (State Training & Registry System) credits.

*Continued on next page*

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Eight libraries were awarded early literacy grants with a requirement of a community partner as well as a community match for funding. The requirement proved to be a challenge, and, in retrospect, the grant offering should have been larger to offset the added requirement. But there's no better learning experience than doing, and these successful projects made commitments for sustained collaboration.

Remaining grant funds were leveraged as match for grants from the Libri Foundation and to purchase books for distribution by the Indian Education Office at OSPI. The Libri Foundation provided 57 rural and tribal libraries picture book collections worth \$1050 each after the state library funded the \$350 match. Many of the libraries featured the new collections in special programs and in local newspapers; for one small library, it represented half of their yearly book budget and for another the total yearly budget for books.

Grant funds were also used to purchase 27 sets of leveled readers containing fifty stories representing First Nations children in everyday and cultural activities. The stories were written by two early literacy teachers from British Columbia, Canada. Sally Brownfield, a facilitator with the Center for the Improvement of Students at OPSI, distributed over 1050 books to native children over the course of the summer. She shared in



her weekly column on the OSPI website, "So I started with the little ones these books were meant for. I had the extreme pleasure of catching up with some very active 4-to-7-year-olds this summer and offering them books to take home. Books with titles like *Picking Blackberries*, *Crabs For Dinner*, *My Grandma*, *The Powwow*. Some I caught up with during the 2008 Canoe Journey, others I found in neighborhoods, parks or visiting tribal stores on their reservations. Washington tribes and some preschool programs received copies of these books as part of the extensive training of *Every Child Ready to Read* program during the 2007-08 school year. But with the collaboration of many working in partnership these wonderful little books are also in the hands and homes of hundreds of young readers."<sup>2</sup>

**“The *Read to Your Baby* booklet developed by the Pierce County Library System (PCLS) Youth Services Department in 2001 has been translated into Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. To date, over 390,000 copies have been distributed to groups around the state that work with young children and families.”**

#### The Washington State Perspective

There has been incredible movement in early learning since Chris Gregoire became Washington's governor. In 2005 the Washington Learns Steering Committee began an intensive year of study on Washington's education system. Out of their final report came the recommendation to start early so that children thrive and are prepared to enter school. The state has made changes to support this recommendation:

**2006** | The Division of Child Care and Early Learning, formerly (DSHS); the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), which used to be part of the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development; and the Early Reading Initiative, formerly part of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), merged to create the Department of Early Learning (DEL).

**2007** | Thrive by Five, a public-private funding arm, was established to fund local partnerships to serve as models for community-wide approaches to early learning that improve the development of all children birth to age five and their readiness to enter school. Two communities were chosen, White Center and East Yakima, because of their strong local leadership, diverse populations, size, and community commitment to improving early learning. Public libraries are involved as community partners in both White Center and East Yakima programs.

**2008** | Washington libraries form the Early Learning Public Library Partnership (ELPLP). The mission of the Early Learning Public Library Partnership is to strengthen the ability of public libraries to fully participate in the advancement of early learning in Washington State. ELPLP is represented by the Foundation for Early Learning. Member libraries want recognition by early-learning professionals, decision-makers, and the public for their work in early learning.

The community and ELPLP member libraries are invited to apply for sponsorship of activities that promote the visibility of library early-learning programs locally, regionally, and at a statewide level. The sponsorship committee recently announced the award of \$1,350 for early learning events to Whitman County Library, which will host award-winning musician Nancy Stewart for an early-literacy musical celebration free to teachers, daycare providers, parents, and children.

#### Partners in Early Learning

Requests from librarians and other groups serving young children for training, additional materials to support early learning, and ongoing collaboration have increased as libraries become more visible as key players

Continued on page 18

## Libraries as Heroes: Early Literacy in Washington Libraries

Continued from page 17

in early-learning initiatives in their communities.

Library partners include local and state agencies such as:  
Health service organizations, including hospitals  
Farm workers' clinics  
Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)  
Community services offices  
County health departments  
School districts  
Education service districts (ESD)  
Childcare Resource and Referral  
Success By 6  
Head Start and Even Start  
Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)  
Parenting programs  
Family, Friends and Neighbor (FFN)  
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Sometimes an opportunity presents itself when least expected. Washington Reads is the Washington State Library's statewide program to promote reading for all Washington residents. Upon seeing the proof of the Fall poster featuring Marcus Trufant, Seattle Seahawks cornerback, and his daughter Karmyn, State Librarian Jan Walsh realized that it made a perfect early literacy promotional piece. She partnered with Dr. Jill Sells, Medical Director for Reach Out and Read, to distribute posters to 300 medical staff at 49 clinics. Reach Out and Read is a pediatric program that encourages literacy at well-baby checkups. The posters not only enhanced "literacy rich waiting rooms" but went home with families to

encourage sharing a book with their own family.

The challenge for libraries now is how to maintain services and programs in place; to sustain and grow the connections we've made in the early learning arena and our communities; and to keep hopeful that the unprecedented economic turmoil and its inherent effect on libraries will be resolved in the near future.

But because we are heroes and share responsibility well, we know what is important. In the words of Dr. Danielle Z. Kassow, "Sharing books with young children creates moments in time where children and the adults who are important to them can connect on an emotional level. The experience of sharing the book goes beyond the actual act of reading. In fact, research has found that early literacy skills are related to caring, nurturing, warm and loving adult-child relationships. Children need the guidance and support of caring adults to help them learn how books work, what books are all about, and that books are an enjoyable source of entertainment."

And in supporting early literacy, no one does it better than libraries. 

1. Retrieved from <http://news.google.com/archivesearch?q=it%27s+not+my+child+not+my+community+not+my+world&hl=en&ned=us&sa=N&cid=8565221350179126> (January 2009).

2. Retrieved from Sally Brownfield's column at <http://www.k12.wa.us/cisl/BookReview.aspx> (January 2009).

3. Retrieved from <http://www.thrivebyfiveva.org/en/GlobalPages/ThriveBlog/BlogRoot.aspx> (January 2009).



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Formerly WGEP

# The State of the WASL

by Debbie Lahue

Draw a conclusion. Summarize. Identify the author's purpose. Reread. It's that time of year again in Washington. We welcome March by remembering the massive snowfall in Eastern Washington and the record rainfall on the coast. Robins sweetly appear, tulips tease us with what's to come, and the days are getting longer.

It also means it's time for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to begin. That's right, despite all the mixed messages, the WASL will be administered as planned in 2009.

## The WASL in 2009

In our state March 16 marks the start of the high stakes WASL window for high school students. Before spring concludes, all learners in grades 3-8 and high school, as required by No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), will embark on the next and final round of WASL as we know it. Third-through eighth-grade students will take the test between April 13 and May 1, 2009. Some high school students will also be testing this summer between August 10 and 13.

By March many educators have put away the document sets used to prepare for testing and picked up their new proctor manuals, both provided by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Many librarians across the state partner with other educators throughout the year to prepare students for the WASL test. Some librarians also take on the role of building assessment coordinators, handling hundreds of high security test booklets under the direction of the district assessment coordinators.

## The (WASL) Results, Please

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of librarians and other educators, Washington students have made huge strides since the WASL was first administered in 1997. Scores have gradually increased over time. As of now, eighty-six percent of Washington seniors (the class of 2009) have passed both the reading and writing sections of the WASL.

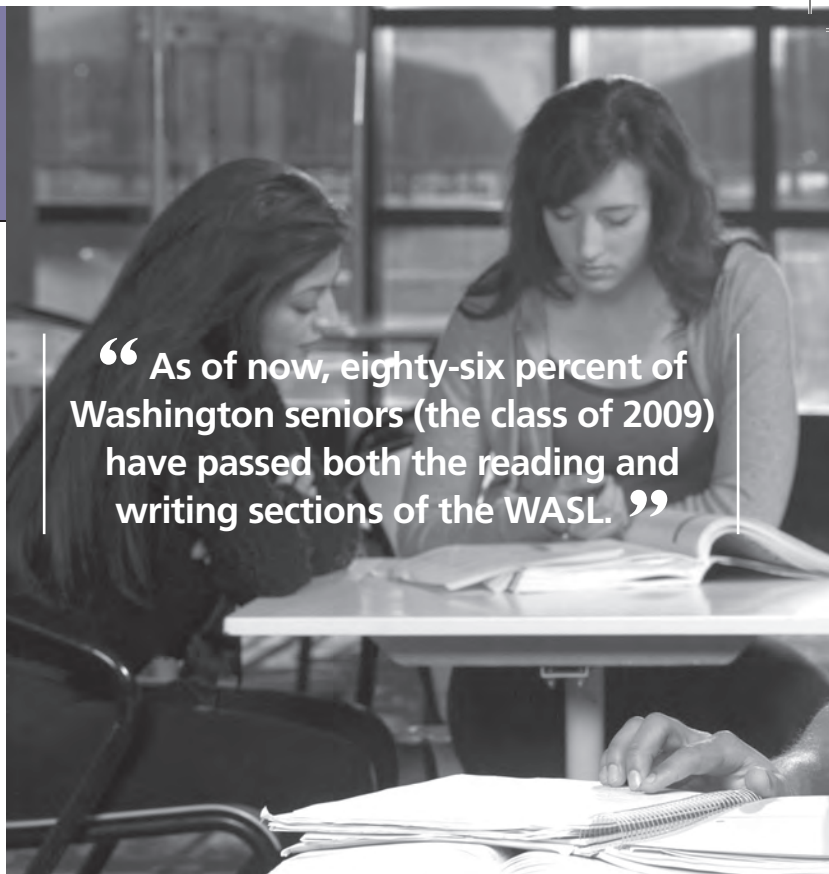
Assessment coordinators, teachers, administrators, and others in the education environment (including librarians) have been analyzing state test results along with other pieces of information to determine what the scores say about reading ability. Formerly, districts experienced a gap between the testing date and state assessment results. Fortunately, the new turn-around time for state assessment results will be shorter. Student progress cannot be effectively monitored by a single point of data. A single test score, regardless of the test, is not enough to inform instruction and communicate growth. WASL scores are just one piece to the puzzle. Relevant information about student's learning, knowledge and skills, must be gathered, analyzed, and discussed over time.

## Tools for Promoting Student Success

Many tools for promoting student success in meeting state reading standards are available to Washington educators. The Online Grade Level resources page on the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

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*Debbie Lahue is a director in the Humanities Department of Educational Services District 101 in Spokane, Washington.*



“As of now, eighty-six percent of Washington seniors (the class of 2009) have passed both the reading and writing sections of the WASL.”

(OSPI) Web site (<http://www.k12.wa.us/ealrs/default.aspx>) provides information by subject, reading level, and grade level. Users may also search by reading components or Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) to find quality resources for reading instruction. Although the name of the assessment will change, the reading standards will remain the same.

The language used in the introduction of this article, and the competencies it describes, is important for students to understand, regardless of test to be administered. Librarians are key in assisting our learners to develop these skills—to summarize, to draw reasonable conclusions, to infer, and to identify figures of speech—when they read. Together, librarians and classroom teachers can model this language for students.

It is important the note that the reading WASL is not a writing assessment. Although students must currently construct written responses, grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation are not assessed on the reading portion of the WASL. Students are expected to use text-specific details rather than enter background knowledge into their answers. Personal opinions and views do not generate points. Credit is only earned when students provide text-based details that support their answers.

## The Future of Assessment in Washington Schools

Before her term ended, former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson announced plans for significant changes to the 2009 WASL. Those changes and additional sweeping revisions are taking place under the direction of new State Superintendent Randy Dorn.

Bergeson planned for elementary and middle school students to experience shortened versions in 2009. True to her plan, and aligned with Dorn's revisions to the Washington State Assessment System, less time will be taken away from instruction at these grade levels. Students in

*Continued on page 21*

# Ten Top Books about Reading

Selected and annotated by Nadean Meyer

I have been a reader all my life but, as a youth librarian for ten years in elementary school and ten years in secondary schools, I know that just loving books is not enough to help children learn to read. Librarians need to be aware of the toolkit that teachers use for reading comprehension. These ten titles discuss how to help students become better readers as you help them to find “just the right book” for their interests.

Allen, Janet, and Christine Landaker. 2005. *Reading history: A practical guide to improving literacy*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Allen and Landaker apply the comprehension and vocabulary techniques of Allen’s earlier books about reading and vocabulary to specific content reading tasks within history.

Beers, Kylene, and G. Kylene Beers, eds. 2003. *When kids can’t read, what teachers can do: A guide for teachers, 6-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Using a real student, “George,” the editors present specific techniques for helping adolescent readers who are behind in reading to understand reading and to practice.

Cullinan, Bernice E., and International Reading Association. 1992. *Invitation to read: More children’s literature in the reading program*. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association.

This book uses trade children’s literature to apply the techniques of reading for comprehension. It includes specific examples of key titles and useful methods to apply the techniques within the classroom. This is a sequel to *Children’s Literature in the Reading Program*.

Davis, Matthew. 2006. *Reading instruction: The two keys*. Charlottesville, Va.: Core Knowledge Foundation.

This short text explains key differences between phonics-based and comprehension-based reading methods and discusses the need for both approaches to allow all children to succeed. This approach mirrors the National Reading Panel and Edward Hirsch’s ideas of core knowledge through key reading lists of world literature.

Grimes, Sharon. 2006. *Reading is our business: How libraries can foster reading comprehension*. Chicago: American Library Association.

The toolkit of the reading teacher is applied to the school librarian. It suggests that common literature-enjoyment techniques can be amplified by the librarian using a few key questions.



Harvey, Stephanie, Anne Goudvis, and Stephanie Harvey, eds. 2007. *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement*. 2nd ed. Portland, Me. Markham, Ont.: Stenhouse Publishers; Pembroke Publishers.

The second edition of this essential book helps teachers apply reading instruction to the students in their class. This is the book most often on reading teachers’ desks.

Keene, Ellin Oliver, and Susan Zimmermann. 2007. *Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The authors share their ongoing research in the Denver area in this updated seminal title that connects reading with thinking abilities. They use research from what good readers do and translate that into field-tested techniques for student success.

Lesesne, Teri S. 2006. *Naked reading: Uncovering what tweens need to become lifelong readers*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers.

Lesesne tackles the ‘tweens and their specific needs for reading. She uses specific titles, research, and the techniques of literacy to develop a program to help students in this age group who frequently start to lose reading skills.

Miller, Debbie. 2002. *Reading with meaning: Teaching comprehension in the primary grades*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers.

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Nadean Meyer is Learning Resources Librarian in the Curriculum Center at Eastern Washington University Libraries.

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Miller applies comprehension technique to the beginning reader specifically in the primary grades with many examples. Her use of the whole school year shows growth for students and the learning community.

Tovani, Cris. 2000. *I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers.

Tovani looks at reluctant adolescent readers and uses the techniques of good readers to help them improve their skills. Stenhouse Publishers has a DVD of her teaching in a classroom and many study guides.

Other titles by the authors listed above are also valuable. Pioneers in the field include: Frank Smith (*Reading without nonsense*), Marilyn Jager Adams (*Beginning to Read: thinking and learning about print*), and Nancie Atwell (*In the middle: writing, reading and learning with adolescents*). Two key publishers in the teaching of reading are: Stenhouse Publishers (<http://www.stenhouse.com/>) and Heinemann, a division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (<http://www.heinemann.com/>).



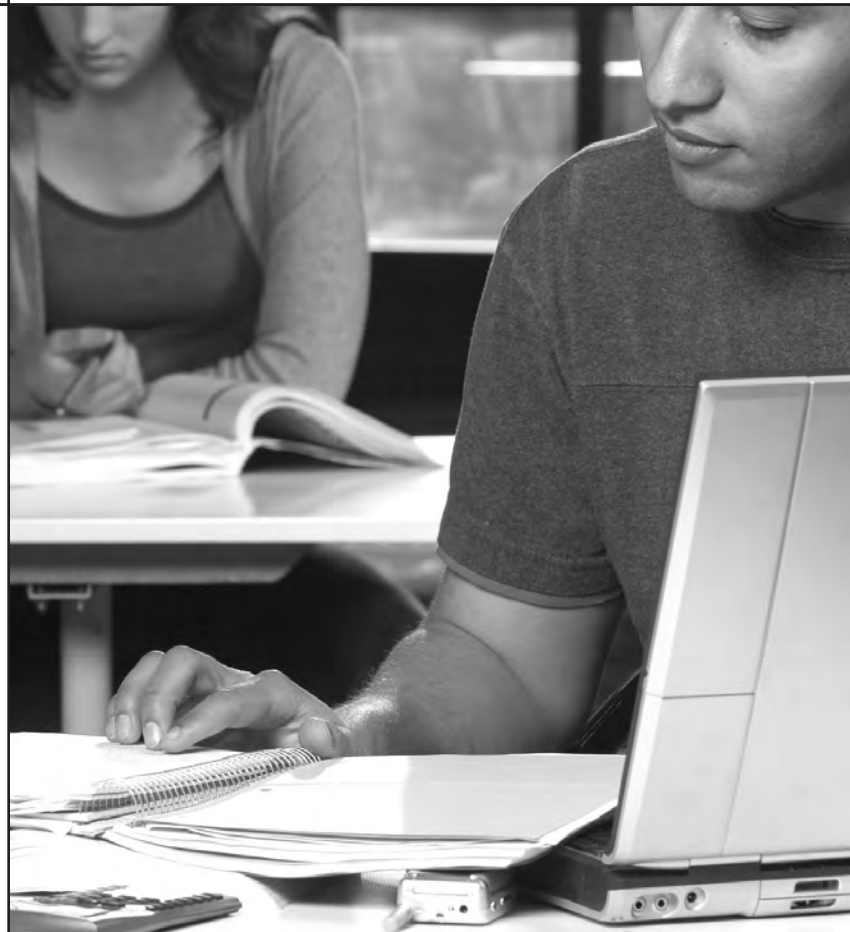
**Start making your plans now to attend the 2009 WALE Conference.** It will be held in Wenatchee, at **The Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel and Wenatchee Convention Center, on October 1 and 2, 2009.** Plans are underway for great speakers and fun and useful breakout sessions. A preconference will be held on September 30 at the Wenatchee Library Service Center (one block from the conference site).

You still have plenty of time to volunteer to help with the conference.

October seems like a long way off, but it will be here sooner than you think, and so will the WALE Conference! For more information, contact Sue Seigerman (2009 Conference Chair) [sseigerman@scl.d.org](mailto:sseigerman@scl.d.org) 509-893-8350, or Georgette Rogers (2009 WALE Chair) [grogers@libertylakewa.gov](mailto:grogers@libertylakewa.gov) 509-232-2510.

## The State of the WASL

Continued from page 19



grades 3-8, the first to see changes, will face fewer short-answer and extended-response questions.

In January 2009 State Superintendent Dorn announced his K-12 Education Agenda for Change, which includes plans to replace the WASL by not only shortening the test, but also reducing the time it takes to get results. He also announced plans to provide educators with computer-administered diagnostic screening as well. Because passing the high school reading test is a graduation requirement, the high school version remains full length for now.

By spring 2010 the new state assessment, Measurements of Student Progress (MSP), will be administered in grades 3-8. By 2011, the also-to-be-developed High School Proficiency Exams (HSPE) will take the place of the current reading and writing WASL graduation requirements. The new computer-based tests will have shortened passages and fewer constructed-response items. Although the tests will differ in significant ways, the assessment will not be less rigorous.

Quality assessments involve purposeful collection of data to inform instruction. Educators across the state are working to use the WASL results and other forms of assessment to improve instruction and to promote student success for all Washington's children.

# Readers' Advisory *on the Run*

by Carolyn Petersen

Recommending a book you love is one of the benefits of working in libraries. In busy school and public libraries today, however, library staff rarely have the time or the opportunity to read "on the job." With an already full work load, how does one stay abreast of new authors, titles, and trends? This article shares techniques whereby you can learn the authors and titles you need to make fresh recommendations to your library customers.

## Knowing the Best-Sellers

Recently someone gave me an email summary of a talk by Duncan Smith, one of the creators of the *Novelist* database. Smith reported that readers generally go around with four or five authors in their heads. These authors have produced books that were our customers' definition of a "good read." They come into the library with three hopes:

1. That their favorite author may have published a new book.
2. That the library has purchased it.
3. That it is there on the shelf.

If this is not the case, they browse the new book shelves and peruse the carts of books to be shelved to see what others liked.

What does these mean for you as a readers' advisor? It means that the great majority of adults only read best-sellers—or will start there when they want to look for a book to take with them on an airplane trip or on vacation. If you can familiarize yourself with best-sellers, you have a shot at beginning to meet many of the requests your customers will pose for "something good to read." The first place to start is to learn which authors inhabit the best sellers list and what type or genre of book they produce.

The following table lists all the fiction authors that appeared on the "books most borrowed in United States libraries" page in the back of *Library Journal* in the last 2 ½ years. Only 57 are authors on this list. One thing that struck me as I compiled the list was how few new authors appeared. Basically if you have an idea of what type of books these familiar authors produce, then you are well on your way to being able to help the majority of your customers connect with materials they want.

## Tracking Best-sellers Using Publishers' Lists

Once you have learned the basic best-selling authors, how do you pick up new authors as they appear on the scene? Best-seller lists have traditionally filled that role.

The most recognized and venerable of all best-seller lists is the *New York Times* best-seller list ([www.nytimes.com/pages/books/bestseller](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/books/bestseller)). The list's annotations give the reader an idea about what the book is about. The ranking allows you to follow a book's popularity. This list is something no individual who does readers' advisory can afford to ignore.

Another useful aspect to the *New York Times* best-seller list is the "also selling" feature. This feature is a good way to pick up new titles and authors before they hit the prime best-seller spots.

The *New York Times* lists' coverage is broad and includes:

Carolyn Peterson is Assistant Program Manager for Library Development at the Washington State Library. This article is based on a presentation she gave at the 2008 WALE conference.

- Hardcover fiction and nonfiction fiction
- Trade paperback fiction
- Mass market PB fiction
- PB nonfiction
- Hardcover advice
- Paperback advice
- Children's books
- Hardcover and paperback business best sellers

Now there are pitfalls to using these lists. The majority of your customers will not be interested in authors and subjects that show up on the list. One setting I worked in wasn't particularly interested in materials written by foreign authors or stories with unfamiliar.

The least useful of all of these lists for librarians is the children's list. The children's books on the list are frequently by celebrity authors. These books sell because of the celebrity name on the cover, and they aren't always the best use for a limited children's book budget. Still, these are titles librarians should be aware of—even if it is just to be able to explain to adults why the best-selling picture book isn't in the children's section.

Another useful list is put out by *Publishers Weekly* ([www.publishersweekly.com/bestsellerslist/2.html?channel=bestsellers](http://www.publishersweekly.com/bestsellerslist/2.html?channel=bestsellers)). The strength of *Publishers Weekly*'s list is that it covers some areas other lists don't, namely: audio books, religion and children's series and media tie-ins. *Publishers Weekly* lists aren't annotated, which is a drawback. I recommend these two publishers lists as the most useful because of the lists' organization and coverage. The websites of major online booksellers such as Barnes and Noble, Borders, and Amazon also have lists that track their best-sellers. People magazine has book reviews in each issue. An individual with little time to read can keep up with forthcoming authors and their new titles through these sites and magazines as well.

## Using Blogs and Other Web Resources

Another way to keep up with new author and titles is to follow blogs or the communal web sites where new titles or authors unfamiliar to you are discussed. Some examples are Library Thing ([www.librarything.com/tour/](http://www.librarything.com/tour/)), Readers Advice ([www.readersadvice.com/](http://www.readersadvice.com/)), and National Public Radio's topic list ([www.npr.org/templates/topics/topic.php?topicId=1032](http://www.npr.org/templates/topics/topic.php?topicId=1032)).

Another quick way to keep up is to read your own library's webpage which frequently has readers' advisory material on it. Expand your horizon by reading the readers' advisory advice on other library's webpages. Seattle Public Library ([shelftalk.spl.org](http://shelftalk.spl.org)) has a lively blog to which librarians and readers contribute. The Sno-Isle Libraries ([www.sno-isle.org/page/?ID=1248](http://www.sno-isle.org/page/?ID=1248)) have "What We're Reading: Our Readers' Advisory Team Picks" on their web page. Spokane County Library District ([www.sclld.lib.wa.us](http://www.sclld.lib.wa.us)) and the North Central Regional library ([www.ncrl.org](http://www.ncrl.org)) both



## Readers' Advisory To-Do List

Check following sites for updates:

- [www.theedgars.com](http://www.theedgars.com)
- [www.rwanational.org](http://www.rwanational.org)
- [www.sfw.org](http://www.sfw.org)
- [www.thehugoawards.org](http://www.thehugoawards.org)
- [www.writertopia.com](http://www.writertopia.com)
- [www.westernwriters.org](http://www.westernwriters.org)

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

subscribe to Washington's most famous readers' advisor's suggestions, "Pearl's Picks." *Book News*, another monthly readers' advisory service, is offered by Yakima Valley Regional Library ([www.yvrl.org](http://www.yvrl.org)) and the Puyallup Public Library ([www.puyalluplibrary.org](http://www.puyalluplibrary.org)). Mount Vernon Public Library staff ([www.ci.mount-vernon.wa.us/page.asp\\_Q\\_navigationid\\_E\\_209](http://www.ci.mount-vernon.wa.us/page.asp_Q_navigationid_E_209)) posts materials of interest under "coming attractions."

Ultimately what you follow should be dictated by your community. Where are your customers discovering these new titles? Ask them—and then follow that source as well.

### Following Genre Awards

Another way to keep on top of emerging authors is to follow the genre awards. Many of them have an award for best NEW authors. Some examples include:

- ☞ The Edgars are awarded in April to mystery authors ([www.theedgars.com/](http://www.theedgars.com/)).
- ☞ The Romance Writers of America give out Rita Awards, and those awards are a rich source of authors and titles for folks who don't read in this area ([www.rwanational.org/](http://www.rwanational.org/)).
- ☞ Science fiction and fantasy folks complicate matters by having three awards:
  - The Nebula ([www.sfwa.org/awards/](http://www.sfwa.org/awards/)),
  - The Hugo ([www.thehugoawards.org/?p=146](http://www.thehugoawards.org/?p=146)), and
  - The John Campbell award ([www.writertopia.com/awards/campbell](http://www.writertopia.com/awards/campbell)).
- ☞ The Spur Award is presented by the Western Writers Association ([www.westernwriters.org/awards.htm](http://www.westernwriters.org/awards.htm)).

### Judging a Book by Its Cover

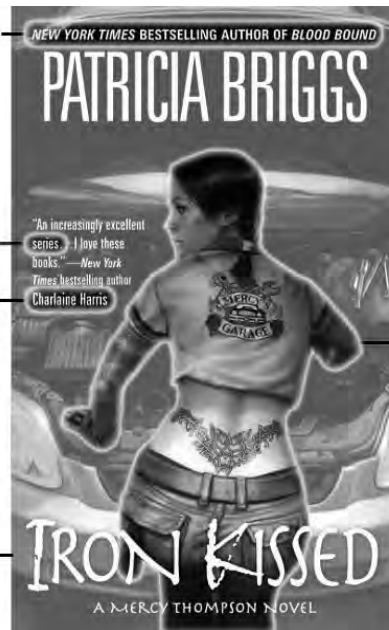
One last suggestion as to how to do readers' advisory on the run is to really examine the cover of the book. The publishers have spent much time and effort to convey a great deal in a quick look. You frequently can judge a book by its cover! Using the *Iron Kissed* cover by Patricia Briggs as an example, a cover teaches you several things: the pedigree of the author, whether the book is part of a series, the characteristics of the main character, the setting, and so on.

So to do readers' advisory when it isn't the only hat you wear:

- ☞ Become familiar with the best-selling authors. Follow their titles and know how you will recommend them to your customers.
- ☞ Check your preferred best-seller list weekly.
- ☞ Find out where the majority of your customers are discovering the titles they request—and follow those sources!
- ☞ Read library web pages—yours or others—for additional suggestions.
- ☞ Use the new resources found on the web.
- ☞ Start "reading" book covers for information about the author, genre, plot, and characters.
- ☞ Set a date in your calendar to check out new authors from the awards lists.

You can do this! Relax and have fun. 📖

Established author



Part of a series

Recommended by like authors

Not an ordinary girl

Against type

Competent

Entire cover set in present day

The cover for *Iron Kissed* is reprinted with the permission of Berkley Publishing Group.

### Authors' List—Books Most Borrowed

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Mitch Albom          | Sophie Kinsella                         |
| David Baldacci       | Raymond Khoury                          |
| Maeve Binchy         | Dean Koontz                             |
| Lilian Jackson Braun | Candy Linker                            |
| Sandra Brown         | Gregory Maguire                         |
| Mary Higgins Clark   | Susan Minot                             |
| Catherine Coulter    | Sue Miller                              |
| Michael Connelly     | Christopher Paolini                     |
| Patricia Cornwell    | Robert B Parker                         |
| Michael Crichton     | James Patterson                         |
| Barbra Delinsky      | James Patterson and friends             |
| Nelson DeMille       | Jodi Piccoult                           |
| Kiran Desai          | Anna Quindlen                           |
| Kim Edwards          | J.D. Robb                               |
| Jeffrey Eugenides    | Nora Roberts                            |
| Janet Evanovich      | J.K. Rowling                            |
| Ken Follett          | Richard Russo                           |
| Lisa Gardner         | John Sandord                            |
| Arthur Golden        | Alice Sebold                            |
| Sue Grafton          | Lisa See                                |
| John Grisham         | Anita Shreve                            |
| Sara Gruen           | Daniel Silva                            |
| Carl Hiassen         | Nicholas Sparks                         |
| Zora Neale Huston    | Danielle Steel                          |
| Iris Johansen        | Nikki Turner                            |
| Jan Karon            | Carl Weber                              |
| Jonathan Kellerman   | Lauren Weisberger                       |
| Sue Monk Kidd        | Zane                                    |
| Stephen King         | (Compiled from <i>Library Journal</i> ) |

## Writing Is the New Reading

by Angelina Benedetti

The theme for this issue of *Alki* is the state of reading. Despite a vested interest in the subject, I confess that I am not up on the latest research. Circulation is up in my library system (and probably in all of yours) but that does not necessarily point to an increase in the number of folks reading and enjoying what they have read.

I *can* say that one indicator, at least among my friends who are librarians, is the increased number of us who feel the compulsion to write about what we read. Anyone who delights in the wonders of the printed page, librarian or no, can be a blogger, create an online journal, or send a monthly e-newsletter chronicling adventures in Literary Land. For those of us who do not just read, but also love to tell you (like it or not) about what we are reading, it is a beautiful new world.

At one time, the only outlet for the “semi-professional” reader was a job with the review journals. Or, if you were truly ambitious (read “masochistic”), you could contract a book deal with a professional press like ALA Editions or Neal-Shuman. For the undisciplined, these venues have two drawbacks: editors and deadlines. Staying up all night to finish a book you hated after the first fifty pages, and then having someone line-out half of what you had to say about it, is just no fun. Ironically, the number of paid gigs has multiplied in recent years as the review journals seek more content for their respective web presences.

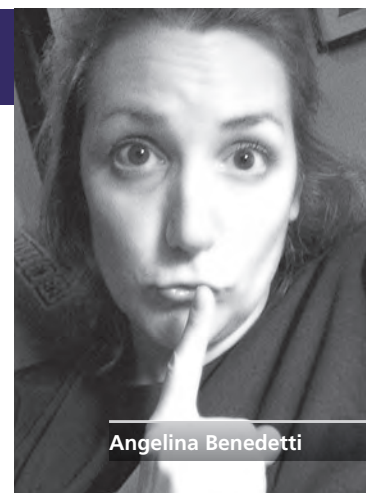
Writing about reading takes a particular combination of skills. A job ad might look something like this, “Wanted: obsessive reader with a head for detail. Must be able to keep unusual hours, forego a personal life, and summarize a plot in thirty words or less. Insomniacs preferred.” It is no surprise that the ranks of book reviewers, bloggers, and journalists include many current and former ALA book committee members.

The very best reviews and columns do more than alert us to the new and interesting, or tell us what to look for when we get around to reading the book ourselves. They are down-right clever. Who among us has not chuckled at an issue of *Kirkus*, known for its snarky put-downs? I found the bad reviews of Stephenie Meyer’s latest installment of the *Twilight* series, *Breaking Dawn*, far more entertaining than the book’s werewolves and vampires.

As much as I love to read, and read about others’ reading, at times my worst-self gets the best of me. There are folks whose reviews, blogs, columns, and posts I actively avoid. For those of you not yet engaged in this practice, here are my personal pet peeves.

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Angelina Benedetti manages the Selection and Order departments for the King County Library System.



Angelina Benedetti

### Things to Avoid When You Are Writing about Reading

1. Avoid writing about a book that no one else cannot get their hands on.

You may think you sound cool referencing a lesser-known volume by an author only you-and-a-handful-of-others have heard about. When your audience has to call on the professional expertise of the ILL department to enjoy the same reading experience, it is pretentious. Then there are the folks who must tell you *now* about something that will not be published for a year. Readers who brag that they received an exclusive ARC (or worse, read a book in manuscript) are more well-connected than well-liked.

2. As much as we know we are in the coolest profession around, our lives are not the stuff of *E!* Bloggers who detail who said what, and to whom, at the publisher party or author event they attended last night only make me wonder why anyone still talks to them. My own reading-writing experiences are more likely to involve a frayed pink bathrobe than pink champagne, so this could just be my pettiness showing.

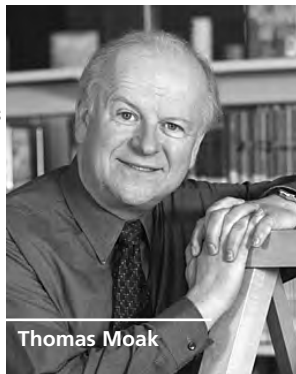
3. There are some reviews that contain more of the book than the writer’s opinion about it. When I see excessive quoting of the material, it makes me wonder if someone is just trying to meet deadline. In the days before the magical 12pt Courier font, I remember the fastest way to bulk up my college comparative lit papers was to quote really *loooong* passages that I then said “spoke for themselves.”

4. There is a fine line between *Kirkus*’s snarkiness and just plain mean. I have unsubscribed to more than one listserv because of the bad behavior of its members. If you have a beef with a particular author or publisher—or if you are, heaven forbid, an author with a beef against a librarian—taking it public is a bad idea. As much as we all like a good row, you might try to remember that behind the words is another book person who thinks, feels, reads, and probably has an overweight cat, too...that last one might be me projecting again.

If iSchool students were ever to conduct a scientific survey of the number of reviews, blogs, columns, and posts published a year, I am sure they would find that the state of reading in Washington and our profession to be better than ever. I encourage you all to embark on your own reading-and-writing adventure. 📖

## People and Places

**Thomas Moak**, in his 30th year as a librarian for Mid-Columbia Libraries in Kennewick, was selected on January 6th as the new mayor of Kennewick. Moak is serving his 12th year on the Kennewick City Council. For WLA, Moak served as Bylaws Chair in the 1990s, headed the 1999 Conference in Pasco while serving on the WLA Board, co-founded (with John Sheller) the former Grassroots! Interest Group, and co-chaired two Library Legislative Days. Moak continues as Kennewick Branch Manager for the library system. Mayor Moak proclaims: "As mayor, I would love to welcome the WLA Annual Conference back to Kennewick."



Museum and Library Services awarded Pierce County Library Foundation with a grant to support the program. Contact Mary Getchell, Communications Director, for more information.

The **2009 Society Gaius Julius Solinus v. Washingtonius** meeting will be held at WLA, Wednesday, April 15 at 9 pm. Once again the Esteemed Society is calling for papers and presentations. Our *Journal of Irreproducible Results* for the library community has had a long and illustrious history; finding new, inconclusive and irreproducible ways to investigate, invigilate and mutilate the highest aspirations of Library Science. Previous scholarly presentations have included Burdick's "H.M.S. Rights-for-All" (with apologies to Gilbert and Sullivan), Carlson's "Problems Associated with Naval Artifacts in the Children's Room," Madden's classic, "The One Reference Question," and Iller's thoughtful "Outsourcing Children's Programs: If the Mafia Ran Storytime." Library folk songs are optional.

Thanks to Darrell Thompson of World Book, **Marie-Anne Harkness** won the first of nine sets of encyclopedias for collecting the most number of signatures for the Washington Coalition for School Libraries & Information Technology petition. The "Three Spokane Moms" created the petition to support school libraries and 21st century technology skills throughout the state of Washington. Marie-Anne successfully collected 258 signatures this summer in front of the **Federal Way Regional Library** (big thank you to Jim Grayson and KCLS), at the local health food store, and other community gatherings throughout Federal Way. Care to sign? Go to <http://gopetition.com/petitions/world-class-education-for-washington.html> for details.

Please join your peers, colleagues, and fellow galley-sla-er, library professionals in submitting these works of creative research to Kirsten Edwards ([kirstedw@kcls.org](mailto:kirstedw@kcls.org)) or Lorraine Burdick ([lburdick@sno-isle.org](mailto:lburdick@sno-isle.org)). Either you, your designated representative, evil twin, or psychic vampire may present. Due to the prestigious nature of the event, requests to present made any later than 8:55 pm of April 15th, 2009, will not be accepted. . 📖

During the second annual Pierce County READS, the goal is for thousands of people to read, share, and talk about the same book at the same time during the free community one-book program, Jan. 5-March 28, 2009. **Pierce County Library System** selected the best-selling *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin as the Pierce County READS book for 2009. The book chronicles one man's mission to promote peace one school at a time. Pierce County Library System and The News Tribune present Pierce County READS, sponsored by Key Foundation. Washington State Library, Office of the Secretary of State, and the Institute of



Photo Submitted by Kim Payne, Everett Public Library

Staff members of Everett Public Library got together one night and made sock monkeys. This is our holiday display outside the children's room for the month of December 2008.

# WLA Communiqué

## READ Program at Eastern Washington University Libraries

Last spring EWU Libraries started the **Eagles Who Read to Lead** program to promote reading at EWU. We're happy to unveil our own celebrity "Read" posters to hang in JFK and Riverpoint Campus Libraries.

Our celebrities are EWU students selected for their academic achievement and leadership. The selection criteria for the Eagles Who Read to Lead program are: status as an EWU junior, cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, demonstrated leadership in EWU clubs, organizations, or athletic teams.

Of the applicants four students were chosen, including **Dustin Massie**, an International Affairs major who was a member of the 2006 Global Leadership Program held at Blas Pascal University in Argentina, and **Vicky Garza**, a Journalism major who has received the Avista Corporation's Minds in Motion scholarship and the Orgullo Latino Scholarship (both pictured). All of the 2008 winners are leaders at EWU who excel academically. They have all shown that they are doing "something big" in their own way.



### CAYAS Presents

#### "Enhancing Literacy Through Art" and "Discover the Great Masters" with MaryAnn Kohl

Nationally known author and presenter MaryAnn Kohl will provide a full day workshop that stresses the process of art - exploration, discovery, and individual creativity. Applicable for those working preschool through school age and guaranteed to jump start your energy for the 2009 Summer Reading Program *Be Creative @ Your Library*. Morning and afternoon presentations will be followed by hands on art activities so bring your smock. One of MaryAnn's books will be included in the registration fee and available for autographing before and after the workshop.

- Understand why art with children is more about **process** than product.
- Learn how to encourage **creativity** and **exploration** when working with children.
- Learn how **literacy** can be enhanced through easy art ideas.

Visit [www.brightwing.com](http://www.brightwing.com) for additional information on MaryAnn Kohl.

Saturday, May 16th	\$30 for WLA members (discount is a benefit of membership)
Registration deadline May 8	\$35 for non-members
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	\$20 for students
Ellensburg Public Library	
209 N Ruby St	
Ellensburg, WA 98926	

Registration Deadline is May 8. Fill out form at <http://cayas.wla.org/files/registration-spring-workshops.pdf>  
Please make checks payable to Washington Library Association Mail to: WLA, 23607 Hwy 99, Suite #2C, Edmonds, WA 98026

Registration costs include lunch and a copy of one of MaryAnn Kohl's books.

Apply for a Washington State Library *Individual CE Grant* to cover 50% of registration, travel, lodging, and substitutes. See <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/quicklinks/ce> for more information and an application.

For additional information, please contact: Sarah Lynch at [sslynch@kcls.org](mailto:sslynch@kcls.org) or 425-888-0554

# OLE: An Interview with the Co-Chairs of the Outreach and Literacy for Everyone Interest Group

by Brian Soneda

OLE (Outreach and Literacy for Everyone) Co-Chairs Theresa Gemmer and Bonnie Gerken were kind enough to share their thoughts on the WLA interest group they founded. Theresa is the outreach librarian for Everett Public Library and served as the president of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services in 2008. Bonnie is the mobile services manager for Sno-Isle Libraries. Both Theresa and Bonnie were of invaluable assistance to me when I worked on selecting a new bookmobile for the Mid-Columbia Library in 2002-2003, so I knew how much they know about bookmobiles and the broader outreach mission.

**Alki:** Tell us a little about your library careers.

**Theresa Gemmer:** The first library I used was the Sno-Isle Bookmobile starting at age three. I didn't first step into the downtown library until four or five years later. It surprised me to learn that there were not just trucks, but also buildings filled with books! Later I was hired by the Forest Service as their first official woman truck driver. My coworkers considered my reading of books on breaks highly suspicious which, combined with my use of words that were longer than and other than four letter words, made me a pariah. Thinking the library might be a place where I could be a smart truck driver, I applied for a bookmobile position at Whatcom County Library System. I had finally found a job that I loved! While I sought my MLIS at UW, my professors told me that I could never hope to continue working on a bookmobile once I received my degree, but here I am, still loving being a truck driver, cruising around singing along to the radio, and bringing the library to children who don't know yet that libraries also exist in buildings.

**Alki:** Great full circle story! Bonnie, what about your career in libraries?

**Bonnie Gerken:** My first library job was as a page with the Sno-Isle, while attending college. After getting my degree, I served as head of Children's Services at Everett Public Library. Deciding to see more of the country, I worked at Pikes Peak Library District (Colorado Springs, CO) as children's services manager for a few years. Moving back to WA State, I was hired to work at KCLS/Traveling Library to do Childcare Service. In my full circle story, I rejoined Sno-Isle Libraries as assistant children's manager and then transferred to mobile services manager in 1998. I'm retiring at the end of May this year, after 34 years working in libraries.

**Alki:** So what led you to take a leadership role in outreach and literacy?

**BG:** Can I blame Theresa?

**Alki:** (Laughs) Sure.

**BG:** I saw the importance of making sure that these essential library services stay visible and the need to have Mobile Services be part of the state library community.

**TG:** More specifically, Bonnie and I worked with the Oregon Outreach Roundtable in planning and presenting a pre-conference on outreach services at the joint OLA/WLA Conference in 2002. We were so impressed with all they were doing that we felt we could and should do more within our state organization. The literacy interest group was flagging and we were asked if we wanted to incorporate that IG into an outreach/bookmobile interest group. We agreed to do that and Bonnie came up with the great Outreach and Literacy for Everyone (OLE) acronym to cover both roles.

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Brian Soneda is Director of the Mount Vernon City Library and (as of March) an ex-member of the Alki Editorial Board.



The Sno-Isle Bookmobile, a "truck full of books."

**Alki:** What is your OLE highlight?

**BG:** Getting OLE accepted as a WLA Interest Group and being a continuing presence has been a joy.

**Alki:** What about an OLE disappointment?

**TG:** We have had very little interest from people focused on the literacy side of our interest group.

**BG:** And some things we struggle with include increasing our membership, finding leadership replacement and encouraging others' involvement.

**Alki:** Bonnie, tell me about working with Theresa.

**BG:** Theresa is wonderful to work with! She has great ideas, is reliable and is dedicated to providing library service to those without access. No wonder she is a national leader in the field.

**Alki:** Theresa, got something nice to say about Bonnie?

**TG:** Bonnie is a superb organizer of details. She is the type of person who very modestly does great things behind the scenes and doesn't seek or receive the public recognition she deserves.

**Alki:** Who has been a model or mentor for you in your career?

**BG:** I could fill pages but at the top of the list would be Mae Benne, Lois Meyers, Mary Sloan, Gary Strong, Kathleen Sullivan, and Sunny Strong. Librarians are wonderful people and many, many of them have gone out of their way to help me.

**TG:** Mary Reid Arrington was my first library supervisor and her dedication to reaching out to the underserved populations and areas of our country is still my model for library service.


**Alki:** What do you see as the future of OLE?

**BG:** I'm hoping that OLE will continue for many years and become larger. It would be wonderful if more people with an interest in literacy became involved with the group. Over the years there have been many different WLA "outreach" interest groups that have come and then faded away. Whatever happens to OLE, outreach staff will always return.

**Alki:** A concluding comment?

**TG:** Many libraries include in their mission statement something about being a center for lifelong learning and words to the effect that they provide services to everyone in their community. But if libraries don't go outside their walls (and not just through cyberspace) to reach their disadvantaged community members, their frail seniors, their preschoolers, their persons with disabilities that prevent them from using the library buildings, then those wonderful sounding missions or visions are just words. Outreach services with bookmobiles and other delivery methods provide the library services that can turn the vision of library access for all in the community from a dream to a reality.

**Alki:** Thank you, Theresa and Bonnie.

Theresa later reminded me that the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services' 2009 Conference will be held in Everett, October 7-9. 

# Continuing Education Grants from the Washington State Library

By Jennifer Fenton

Are you interested in attending a conference such as Internet Librarian, the ALSC Institute, NWILL, REFORMA, Computers in Libraries or Reference Renaissance? Would you like to take a workshop on cataloging, readers' advisory, Web 2.0, serving homeschoolers, outreach services, services to people with disabilities or working with migrant workers? If so, consider applying for a Continuing Education (CE) grant from the Washington State Library.

Library staff and libraries are invited to apply for these matching CE grants. Only the criteria have changed, not the amount of grant money available.

## Who is eligible for CE grants?

- Librarians and all categories of support staff working ten or more hours per week in a library that is eligible to receive Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds are invited to apply for CE grants from the Washington State Library.
- Organizations whose primary role is to provide or support library and information services and who are eligible to receive LSTA funding may hire a trainer to present a CE event to their own staff or another group whose primary duties are working in libraries.

## What are the guidelines for CE grants?

The Washington State Library has narrowed the focus of its Continuing Education grant program in order to comply with the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) that underwrites these grants. Guidance is provided to state libraries nationwide by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which administers LSTA.

## The following are the priorities that govern the use of LSTA funds:

- (1) expanding services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats, in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages;
- (2) developing library services that provide all users access to information through local, state, regional, national, and international electronic networks;
- (3) providing electronic and other linkages among and between all types of libraries;
- (4) developing public and private partnerships with other agencies and community-based organizations;
- (5) targeting library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills; and
- (6) targeting library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty.

CE grants fund activities must comply with one or more to the six federal priorities and have a direct benefit to the end user of the library.

## Which CE grant activities qualify?

In the past year, staff benefitted from attending specialized conferences and workshops such as Internet Librarian, OCLC cataloging courses, NWILL, Reference Renaissance, National Educational Computing Conference, REFORMA and the ALSC Institute.

In general, the more specific the learning event, the easier it is to know the expected outcomes and determine if the CE event fits in with the IMLS guidelines.

Some ideas for topics that may qualify for CE grant funding are:

- Interlibrary loan
- Internet skills
- Technology (including Web 2.0)
- Digitizing library collections
- Virtual reference services
- Babies and books programs
- English as a second language
- Homework help
- Literacy for children, teens, adults and families
- Summer Reading Program
- Bookmobiles
- Outreach services
- Prison and jail library services
- Services to migrant workers and other non-English speakers
- Services to nursing homes
- Services to people with physical or learning disabilities

Some upcoming events that may qualify for CE Grants are:

- 2009 National Streams of Language, Memory, and Lifeways Conference for Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums, Portland, Oregon, October 19-22, 2009
- Understanding the Mysteries of the Teenage Brain & Teens in Your Library, WALE Preconference, Wenatchee, WA, September 30, 2009
- Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS), Everett, WA, October 7-9, 2009
- Enhancing Literacy Through Art & Discover the Great Masters with Mary Ann Kohl, Ellensburg, WA, May 16, 2009

All CE Grant applications are reviewed on an individual basis and an award is granted based on the specific application meeting the required criteria. The applicant must demonstrate a connection to one or more of the LSTA guidelines and how the CE event directly benefits the end user.

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Jennifer Fenton is Training Coordinator at Washington State Library.

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### What types of activities are ineligible for the CE grants?

- Activities that do not comply with at least one of the six LSTA priorities
- Activities that do not directly lead to the development and delivery of programs and services to the end user
- Attendance at general library conferences (WLA, WLMA, WALE, ALA, PLA, PNLA, ACRL, IFLA, etc.)
- Training of which the sole aim is the improvement of management or supervisory skills or improvement of library operations
- Applications from and training for trustees, friends of libraries, and library foundation staff

General conference attendance does not meet LSTA goals because conferences go beyond the scope of the LSTA priorities. Since there is no guarantee that a participant will attend only LSTA approved programs, general conference attendance is no longer supported by CE grants. As IMLS staff has stated, "The use of LSTA funds to train library staff, trustees, or volunteers in other areas of librarianship goes well beyond the intent of the program priorities and is not allowable."

While general conference attendance is not an allowed LSTA expense, a pre-conference that matches one or more of the federal priorities and benefits the end users of the library can qualify for a CE grant. For example, the pre-conference at WLA 2009 in Spokane, Evaluating Your Library's Collection, deals with making library collections more accessible to patrons and therefore connects to the LSTA priority #1. It also has a direct benefit to library customers who need to be able to find quality materials easily.

A CE grant from the Washington State Library would only cover the expenses related to attending the pre-conference, not the general conference as a whole. Eligible expenses (e.g., registration for the pre-conference but not for the general conference), or a pre-conference include one night of lodging (if more than fifty miles from regular worksite) and travel expenses such as airfare or mileage as well as pre-conference registration.

### How are funds awarded?

CE grants work on a matching basis: they can be used to match up to fifty percent of the total cost of the CE event. Thus the grantee's contribution must be at least fifty percent of the total cost; this match may be a combination of an individual's personal contribution and that of their employer.

- Funds are paid on a reimbursement basis pending receipt of a claim. The claim and supporting documentation must be received within sixty days after the end of the CE event. Grant claims not received within sixty days after the CE event has ended will be cancelled if no extension has been granted. It is the responsibility of the grantee to request an extension to the sixty day deadline, if needed.

Continued on page 31

## Save The Date!

### The PNLA/WLA Conference 2010 in Victoria, B.C.

**The time is right to start planning to come to Victoria from August 11 to 13, 2010, for the joint PNLA/WLA Conference. Because the Public Library Association (PLA) national conference will be held in Portland, Oregon, in March 2010, the WLA and PNLA boards have approved changing the joint conference date and location. We used the same approach in 2004 when PLA met in Seattle.**

Of course, describing the location as attractive is an understatement. Many WLA members have already visited Victoria. For those who haven't, a quick Internet search reveals numerous wonders. Even more local publicity is coming out due to the upcoming Winter Olympics scheduled for the Vancouver-Whistler area. The conference site, the Victoria Conference Centre, was recently remodeled. And PNLA has already secured a block of rooms at the Empress Hotel at about one-third the normal summer rate. We will contract for additional rooms at nearby lower cost hotels.

Michael Burris, the conference co-coordinator for PNLA, and I are beginning to work on speakers and programs. One obvious topic is how libraries can best provide leadership and services during difficult economic times. Another topic is how libraries can best support our communities and constituencies during climate change and energy-cost increases. As we begin to form the conference committee and write contractual agreements, I would love to hear people's ideas about the conference program and other issues. The WLA Board is discussing how to facilitate conference attendance and provide alternatives for people who simply can't attend.

For many of us, the travel arrangements deserve some attention. If your passport is not current through next year, consider this your reminder to update it sooner rather than later. As of June 1, 2009, due to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, U.S. citizens will need to present additional documentation to re-enter the U.S., even by land or sea. Documentation options include the enhanced driver's license, passport card, and traditional passport book. The U.S. State Department link at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc\\_2223.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html) has further information, among other sources such as the Department of Homeland Security. On the other hand, for anyone wanting to stay on the island for a few/many more years, here's also a link to Citizenship and Immigration Canada: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/index.asp>.

### I hope to see you in Victoria in 2010!

Phil Heikkinen, PNLA/WLA Conference 2010  
Co-Coordinator

# I'd Rather Be Reading

## Made in Washington

by David Wright

Recently I've found a new use for that modicum of vague foreboding not already devoted to the global economy, which had previously been apportioned to the almost daily news of another independent bookstore closing its doors. (I still mourn the loss those dual book-browsing meccas, Shorey's and Beatty's: Seattle just isn't the same). Fresh alarums from the book industry now direct my concern further up the supply chain to fret about the health of publishers in general, and of our own funky, homegrown bookmaking scene in particular. As Washington libraries stretch their collection budgets, I hope we keep a special spot in our hearts and wallets for our local presses.

For example, I recently realized that the outermost verge of our state will no longer be the refuge from which Loompanics Unlimited unleashes its uncompromisingly outrageous how-tos upon an unwary world; the company closed its doors in 2006. It saddens me to think of all those who will never get to browse their "Best Book Catalog in the World," its pages seething with outlaw manuals on picking locks, tax evasion, covert surveillance, space travel, the ever popular *How to Find Missing Persons*, and the deeply useful *The Art and Science of Dumpster Diving*. I always imagined Loompanics churning out such broadsides for a coterie of road warriors and zombies well beyond the next apocalypse, and yet they're gone, all gone.

And while we're beyond the fringe, recently I picked up the *The Bizarro Starter Kit* after I noticed an upswing in demand for many of the edgy absurdist writers in its pages, and it surprised me not in the least to learn that Seattle was home to one of the underground genre's chief publishers, Afterbirth Books, purveyor of such twisted tomes as *Pocketful of Loose Razorblades* by John Edward Lawson and *Suicide Girls in the Afterlife* by Gina Ranalli. Imagine the delight of cult fiction aficionados at finding this much dangerous weirdness on your library shelves; the two-volume *Starter Kit* is a must for libraries who want to stay au courant with the avant-garde. And while you're at it, you might also get Matt Brigg's early gem *Remains of River Names*, from Black Heron Press, and Joe Wenderoth's *Letters to Wendy's* and *No Real Light*, from Wave Press, both local houses.

Washington has always been fertile ground for thought-provoking, genre-busting speculative fiction and fantasy, and Aqueduct

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David Wright is a readers' services librarian at the Seattle Public Library's central branch, a member of the Readers' Advisors of Puget Sound, and writes columns and reviews for *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and the *NovelList* database. His library's blog is called *Shelf Talk* (<http://shelftalk.spl.org>).



David Wright

Press has made a name in feminist science fiction, publishing Theodora Goss, Nicola Griffith, Gwyneth Jones, Nisi Shawl, and many other writers whose star is rising even with readers who "never read SF." *Wizards of the Coast Discoveries* appeals to the same adventuresome readers with Melanie and Steve Rasnic Tem's *The Man on the Ceiling*, a haunting mixture of Shirley Jackson and Salvador Dali in which the authors attempt to grasp a dark presence in their lives.


Between Fantagraphics in Seattle and Dark Horse in Portland, the Cascade corridor is an epicenter of the graphic novel universe. Fantagraphics glorious explosion of graphic wonderfulness regularly challenges my resolution to buy fewer books, as with *Beasts 2*, a breathtaking collection of creatures mythological and cryptozoological variously rendered by a slate of ninety artists, and one of very few books that would have appealed to me as much at the ages of 5, 15, and 35. Graphic novels circulate like mad, and Fantagraphics publishes some of the best.

My childhood recollections of local publishing are dominated by homespun chapbooks filled with quaint illustrations of seagulls, mushrooms, clams and ferns, and sporting titles like *Seattle Houseboaters Gourmet Scrapbook of Recipes and Tall Tales!* That one was published by Peanut Butter Press, which is still going strong with titles such as *JP Patches*, *Northwest Icon*, or Jeri Callahan's *Staying Afloat: Life Aboard Houseboats, Barges and Liveaboards*. (I bought a copy of this straight from the author on her houseboat as we visited friends one summer evening). The other book I remember from back then was *Footloose Around Puget Sound*, an early title from the Mountaineers, who have long since expanded from trail guides to an impressive array of titles on the great outdoors, sports, and green living. They do great adventures books such as Art Davidson's jaw dropping *Minus 148 Degrees: First Winter Ascent of Mt. McKinley*, as well as huge omnibus editions of classic climbing narratives by H.W. Tilman, Eric Shipton, and Boardman Tasker, which would make the perfect gift for – well, for me, for one.

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Of course, there are our university presses, turning out titles that are anything but academic to Washington readers, such as Cliff Mass's *The Weather of the Pacific Northwest* (UW Press), an eye-opening introduction to a topic of perennial fascination for us mossbacks, or Hill Williams's *The Restless Northwest: A Geological Story* (WSU Press), an equally revelatory lay-person's guide about the imperceptibly slow weather under our feet. And many more, from Marquand Press (get your hands on a copy of *Transfigurations: North Pacific Coast Art* to discover a new level of book lust), to the Timeless Books' enlightening *The Inner Life of the Asanas*, just the thing for Yoga newcomers still trying to find the meditation amidst the pretzel work, to Copper Canyon's *Straw for the Fire: From the Notebooks of Theodore Roethke*, an irresistible invitation into the game of poetry. And, of course, there are all those great Sasquatch Books titles that run the gamut from Lauren Weedman's hilariously heartfelt *A Woman Trapped in a Woman's Body* to Eric Liu's inspiring *True Patriot* to Tim Egan's gripping story of crime in depression era Spokane, *Breaking Blue*; all this, and *Book Lust* too.

These days as more of us resolve to eat locally and act locally, let's also try to read locally, and promote some delicious homegrown fiction, non-fiction and poetry in our libraries. 



- Reimbursements cannot exceed the original granted amount.
- Individuals are allowed \$1000 per calendar year in CE funds, with a maximum of \$750 per event. Organizations are allowed \$3,000 per calendar year. These amounts are based on the amount actually reimbursed to the grantee (not award amounts).

**What expenses are eligible for reimbursement?**

- Event registration, trainer fees, travel, lodging, and required work shop materials (workbook, texts). 

*For more information about CE grants, please visit the CE grant website: <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/libraries/training/continued.aspx> or contact Jennifer Fenton, CE/Training Coordinator, Washington State Library at [jfenton@secstate.wa.gov](mailto:jfenton@secstate.wa.gov) or 360.570.5571.*

# Impact & Influence

WASHINGTON LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
**2009 CONFERENCE APRIL 15-18**  
 SPOKANE WASHINGTON

***It's not  
 too late to  
 register!***

<http://files.wla.org/conferences/wla2009/>

# WLA Thanks Our 2008 Members

## Sustaining Members

- Group Health

- Local Hazardous Waste Management Program Library
- SHKS Architects

## Nonprofit Members

- Bibliographic Center for Research
- Federal Way Libraries

- Friends of Liberty Lake Library
- Friends of the Burbank Community Library
- Friends of Federal Way Libraries

- Independent Study in Idaho
- Sikora Library Services
- Washington Coalition Against Censorship
- Washington Coalition for Open Government

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Holman Library/Green River Community College  
Jefferson County Library  
Kelso Public Library  
King County Library System

Kitsap Regional Library  
La Conner Regional Library District  
Liberty Lake Municipal Library  
Longview Public Library  
Lopez Island Library  
Mid-Columbia Library  
Neill Public Library  
North Central Regional Library  
Northwest Indian College  
Ocean Shores Public Library  
Orcas Island Library  
Pend Oreille County Library District  
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Pierce College Library  
Pierce County Library System  
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Richland Public Library  
San Juan Island Library  
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Sedro-Woolley Public Library  
Skagit Valley College/Norwood  
Sno-Isle Libraries  
Spokane County Library District  
Spokane Public Library  
Stevens County Rural Library  
Tacoma Public Library  
Timberland Regional Library  
University of Washington Libraries  
Upper Skagit Library  
Walla Walla Community College Library  
Walla Walla Rural Library District  
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**Alki**

**WLA Journal**

23607 Highway 99, Suite 2-C  
Edmonds, WA 98026

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BLAINE, WA