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“Lifescapes” Across the Country

After reading the interesting and encouraging article in the November/December 2003 Public Libraries (“Lifescapes: A Writing and Reading Program for Senior Citizens,” p. 379), I suggested the Lifescapes program be tried at our library, a community library in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. There is much interest here on the staff because, like Reno, Nevada, our service area is experiencing (and will continue to) dramatic population growth in the number of senior citizens. We already have a successful book talk series here and word processing resources on our public computers. We also have a local writers’ center and a four-year community college which is involved in adult education of all kinds. Our adult services librarian, Patricia Teller, immediately saw the logic of trying this because of the evolution of daytime Internet and computer classes here at the library and the number of seniors who are active participants in her monthly book talk sessions. Our department director, Harriet Henderson, is interested because of the fit with our country’s seniors initiative and our community demographics. I am interested because I think memoir writing can be a wonderful sharing experience and is a natural fit in a library with a strong storytelling tradition like the Montgomery County Public Libraries.

Thanks very much for writing the article and letting us all know about your program. It’s a great idea and we hope to have one too.—Nancy J. Balz, Staff Member, Kensington Park Library-MCPL, Kensington, Md.
Many thanks go to Renée for her excellent organization, help, and advice, which have made my two months of editing Public Libraries a great experience. Other people who have been extremely helpful are ALA’s Ellie Barta-Moran and Kathleen Hughes; the regular Public Libraries contributing editors; and the volunteer peer reviewers who have so graciously given of their time and effort in making this issue happen.

In the March/April 2004 issue of Public Libraries, Renée wrote an editor’s note on conditions and resources for parent-librarians (“A Salute to Parent-Librarians,” 8). Her article, along with the generosity of the people I just mentioned, started me thinking. Regardless of whether or not we’re responsible for children at home, we are responsible to a certain extent for the “care and feeding” of our patrons and our colleagues at work. Our business, whether we work in a public, academic, school, or special library, consists largely of taking care of other people and helping them solve their problems. Librarianship is definitely a helping profession, just as much as teaching, nursing, or social work.

After ten years in the field, I’ve found that librarians, in general, are an amazingly helpful, generous breed. We help patrons, co-workers, and even colleagues we’ve never met in person. We volunteer countless hours in community service and committee work. We edit Web sites, write for newsletters and blogs, contribute to electronic discussion lists, speak at conferences. Some of our efforts are compensated, others are not.

We’re doing all this while dealing with the daily demands of our jobs, which are not, as a nonlibrarian friend once innocently said, “just sitting at a desk all day reading books.” Some of us don’t even have a desk of our own, and if we do, chances are it is in the middle of a high-traffic public area. Adding to our stress are institutional issues such as staff shortages, budget cuts, and a frequent lack of stimulation and challenge. The conditions under which many of us work can be a breeding ground for the dreaded “burnout.”

Stress researcher Christina Maslach defines burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do people work of some kind. It is a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or having problems. Thus, it can be considered one type of job stress.”

A more specific description of burnout for librarians comes from Herb White, former Dean and Professor of the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science and a well-known writer and consultant. I once took a class from Dr. White, who had a habit of saying things in class that didn’t resinate at the time, but now, years later, pop into my head and give me “ahah!” moments. Consider, for example, his definition of burnout:

Burnout does not come simply from working hard, when that work is toward achievable ends that carry successful conclusion, credit, reward, and celebration. . . . Burnout comes from frustration; from insoluble dilemmas; from the recognition that the backlogs cannot be eradicated no matter how hard we try; that we can never succeed and never get credit; that irascible users will never understand and never be satisfied; and that certain managers will neither understand nor care while they blithely cut budgets in the confident expectation that nothing bad for them will result.

Librarians deal with one or more of these situations every day. We are prime candidates for burnout, whether or not nonlibrary folk recognize it. Leonard Kniffel, in a May 1999 article, reported on librarians’ stress level ranking in the 1999 Jobs Rated Almanac as falling “at the unstressed bottom, along with florist, piano tuner, and appliance repairer.” Just ask a florist on Valentine’s Day about his or her stress level!

Not only do others not see the danger of burnout, often we don’t either. Burnout can manifest itself in a number of symptoms, including:

- Physical exhaustion—weariness, headaches, nausea, sleeplessness
- Emotional exhaustion—feelings of depression and hopelessness, crying, loss of coping mechanisms
- Mental exhaustion—negative attitudes toward yourself and others, your work, and your life in general

Recognizing these symptoms, however, is the first step toward taking responsibility for our own well-being, even if it doesn’t seem that we can change our environment, at least not right away. How do we keep our energy up? How do we recharge? How can we avoid burnout? Here are a few suggestions for keeping burnout at bay:

- Get plenty of exercise. Join a gym, or get exercise equipment for home use. Take a walk over your lunch hour either alone or with a group of co-workers.
- Take breaks. Even if you’re staying in the building, go to lunch. Don’t work straight through your lunch hour, and don’t eat at your desk.
- Take longer breaks. Make full use of your vacation time, and if you can, consider taking an extended break. Eloise May, director of the Arapahoe Library District in Littleton, Colorado, did just that after twenty-four years at one organization. Knowing she was burned out, she requested

continued on page 140
The Librarian action figure (a five inch tall plastic action figure developed by Seattle based Accoutrements) has ignited discussion about the image of librarians and piqued curiosity about the new librarian in the age of the Internet. In light of the fact that one in four librarians will reach retirement age by 2009, perhaps we should be focusing the national spotlight on the issue of librarian recruitment. “With one of the highest median ages of any occupation (forty-seven years old), librarianship is in frequent need to replenish itself,” so stated an ALA press release issued at the onset of the PLA national conference. Thus, in less than five years, 25 percent of us may be sipping margaritas in the Caribbean or indulging in some other well-deserved leisure activity. As enticing as that may be, we will be leaving a significant knowledge void when we retire.

So as we look to the future, one of the greater challenges facing our profession and PLA will be finding, training, and growing the next generation of librarians. With this reality, it is imperative that PLA make recruitment an ongoing association priority during the next five years. In fact, recruitment is one of PLA's key goals. This effort began in 2000 with a compelling report authored by PLA's Recruitment of Public Librarians Committee, which called on us to address concerns about the dearth of librarians. While some progress has been made, now is the time for a concerted effort by PLA to plan and invest in our future by developing a framework that commits our association’s strengths and resources to address the recruitment dilemma. This can build on the current efforts begun by PLA’s Recruitment Committee and establish a formal program that includes scholarships, mentoring, and internship opportunities, as well as a focus on diversity.

Here are some ideas that can form part of the framework:

Support Scholarship Initiatives. PLA has been a leader in providing scholarship opportunities to prospective students. In the last several years, more than $150,000 dollars has been committed to ALA's Spectrum initiative to recruit minority candidates. The ALA Office for Diversity reports that 254 Spectrum Scholars graduated since its inception in 1998, with 154 of them employed in a library setting. Of these, fifty-one, or 34 percent, are working in public libraries. This figure is similar to the number working in academic libraries. But public libraries cannot afford to lose this extraordinary talent to other libraries. A formal outreach campaign to attract librarians that will reflect the changing demographics of our nation and a strategic effort to make public libraries their career choice must be priorities. PLA's travel scholarships awarded to Spectrum Scholars to attend the PLA conference is an excellent example of reaching out to a new and vibrant generation of librarians but more needs to be done. Currently, only about 10 percent of the scholars are PLA members. That's where a mentoring and internship program can make a difference.

Develop Internship and Mentoring Programs. One innovative approach to growing future leaders committed to public librarianship is to develop a nationwide internship program that would provide management training, leadership development, and future employment settings to a corps of young and energetic graduates. The design of such a program could involve public libraries, library schools, and PLA as partners. Another key element might involve a one on one mentoring program that focuses on growing future leaders in our association. Such a mentoring program would be an effective way to grow our own and to sustain and retain this talent pool so they stay involved and committed to public librarianship.

Promote Public Librarianship. Talk it up! Public librarianship is exciting and dynamic. It is changing, and it offers many career options that suit different styles. But we need to do a better job to evoke a new image that shatters the old stereotype. PLA’s “Ask me why I love my job” campaign (see www.pla.org for more information) offers a good model for providing information about careers in public libraries. Creating greater awareness about public librarianship can complement PLA's library advocacy campaign by emphasizing the invaluable role that library staff play as information navigators. More stories and testimonials as part of a strategic promotional campaign can only help to inspire young people to choose work in public libraries. PLA has many dedicated “action figures” that contribute significantly to our association and profession. As we contemplate the future, let's make sure that an equally committed cadre of librarians is ready for the call to action.

And finally, a big thank you! This has been a truly exciting year for PLA. A record breaking conference in Seattle, a leading advocacy campaign, and tangible results of the early literacy project are but a few projects that should make us proud of the work of our membership. It has been a pleasure to serve as your PLA president. Thank you for the honor and the privilege.

Luis Herrera, Pasadena Public Library, 285 E. Walnut St., Pasadena, CA 91101-1556; lherrera@ci.pasadena.ca.us.
and got a year’s unpaid leave from her board of directors. She returned to work one year later “with renewed energy, a step-back-from-the-wall perspective, and a new appreciation that you have a great job in a great profession.”

- Keep a sense of humor and perspective. Or, don’t take things too personally. When people criticize your work or job performance, consider it as a potential learning opportunity. Of course, if comments become abusive, take action immediately by reporting it to your supervisor, or, if it’s coming from your supervisor, your human resources office.

- Go home. Your job is not your entire life. Have outside interests, and maintain relationships with your family and friends. Again, Dr. White writes, “Work hard, work well, work effectively. Work until quitting time. Then go home and enjoy the rest of your life. If that leaves an unsolved problem, tell your boss on the way out the door or write the boss a note.”

- Keep your resume updated. Even if you’re incredibly happy and fulfilled at your current position, it never hurts to take an inventory of the skills you’ve developed. You should be getting yearly performance appraisals anyway; putting down on paper all the wonderful things you’ve done over the past year can be a reminder to both you and your boss. You can also use it as a blueprint for projects you’d like to complete over the coming year. And of course, if that perfect job ad just happens to appear, you’ll be ready.

The bottom line is that we all need to take care of our own business first, before trying to help others. How do you avoid burnout? What strategies do you use to keep your energy and enthusiasm up? How does your place of work support, or not support, you? Let us know! And in the meantime, work hard, work well, work effectively, work until quitting time. Then go home.

Jennifer A. Schatz

Written February 2004. Contact Renée Vaillancourt McGrath, regular feature editor, at 258A. N. Higgins Ave. #145, Missoula, MT 59802; publiclibraries@aol.com.

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Join the Major Leagues @ Your Library

The Campaign for America’s Libraries is pleased to announce that the Public Library Association (PLA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), is a new sponsor of the Join the Major Leagues @ your library® program developed by ALA, Major League Baseball, and the Major League Baseball Players Association.

The 2004 program will launch in the late spring and will run through mid September. The centerpiece of the program is the Join the Major Leagues @ your library contest, an online baseball trivia contest that challenges participants to utilize the resources available at the library to answer baseball trivia questions of increasing difficulty. Available in English and Spanish, the trivia contest is featured on the campaign Web site at www.ala.org/yourlibrary/jointhemajorleagues, and is also available at www.mlb.com. This year’s trivia questions will once again be developed by the library staff at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, and will be organized by age group (ten and under, eleven through thirteen, fourteen through seventeen, and eighteen and older).

A new program poster featuring Major League Baseball players will be available free of charge to librarians while supplies last. To receive a poster, librarians are encouraged to register now on the Join the Major Leagues Web site. One poster will be sent per library or library branch. The first one hundred librarians to register will receive a set of Jackie Robinson/History lives @ your library bookmarks from ALA Graphics. By registering, librarians will also receive access to other promotional materials once the program officially launches to the public, including downloadable artwork and a resource toolkit. New incentives and prizes will also be offered this year for libraries that bring in the greatest number of entries and for those that conduct the best local public relations effort. The grand prize winner of the 2004 program will receive a trip to a designated game of the 2004 Major League Baseball World Series next fall; first place prizes will be awarded as well.

Look for more details on the 2004 program on the campaign Web site at www.ala.org/yourlibrary.
Here Come the Boomers

Don Roalkvam and Mary Costabile

Journalists have spent the last few years anticipating and fearing the retirement of the large cohort of individuals born between 1946 and 1964 called “baby boomers.” This diverse group of individuals has been blamed for the coming strains on the health-care system and the anticipated failure of Social Security, Medicare, and other large systems that will be stressed by their retirement. But it is a poor cloud indeed that does not have a silver lining, and we will explore the reasons why libraries, librarians, and trustees particularly should be preparing for the “boomers,” if not with glee, then certainly with eager anticipation.

Phyllis Moen, director of the Cornell Employment and Family Careers Institute, examined the retirement plans of the baby-boom generation. She states, “Many workers of this generation do not view retirement as the end of work but rather as a change in work and lifestyle, a time to do what you like rather than what you have to, including travel, volunteering and more education.”

Boomers As Library Patrons

Individuals in the first throes of retirement often begin to do the math and realize with alacrity what a free treasure house of information exists in their local library. The time they never had before for leisure activities stretches out before them and all the things that were put off become possible. In addition, multiple choices for self-education are available at the library; and since we are a nation of can-do people, the sections for “self-help” and “how to” will continue to be well used. Whether they are looking for information on new careers, volunteer opportunities, or just planning the next trip, this cohort will be a large, and perhaps new, user group in the library.

Trips to the local library build a sense of satisfaction and community and, necessarily, a willingness to participate and help out. This feeling of goodwill can be nurtured by attentive librarians and enhanced by outreach from library trustees. While people usually begin to offer to help in a tentative way, the group fellowship and sense of helping the library can provide strength to resolve.

Boomers As Library Volunteers

However, the “boomer” generation may not be content with things as they are but may seek to enhance services, rearrange the usual way of operations, or insist on change. In short, helping at the discarded book sale will not be nearly enough. This energy, if carefully tapped, can benefit the library and the community.

The boomers will be looking for up-to-date computer connections at the library, since much of their work lives have involved getting used to new computer systems. This group can form a powerful advocate group to speak up at budget hearings for funds for new systems. Since this group comes from the community with deep knowledge of business and government processes, librarians and library trustees will have a highly educated, committed, and energetic talent pool to create change at the local, state, and national level.

The following list may convince you of the need for planning, formulating wish lists, and developing a recruitment organization before the cohort hits your doors.

As a group the boomers will have:

- recent in-depth experience in a particular field of endeavor;
- knowledge of the community and its business and government processes;
- a network of community contacts;
- sophistication and enthusiasm;
- free time; and
- numbers (approximately 76 million).

Because this group as a whole will be familiar with up-to-date technology, but given the aging process may already be in need of specific technological enhancements, the wise library will begin to plan to increase the number of books on tape or later, digitally enhanced books, e-books or whatever new iteration there will be of that genre, large-print books, and some computers with voice transmission.

Programming may enhance library attendance as well, and not only authors but individuals with work expertise may be prevailed upon to present programs. One of the most well-attended programs at our local library involved a retired professor who was also a devotee of Patrick O’Brien’s books and who discussed the geography, time frame, and history used for the settings of the books. There was standing room only in the meeting room.

Boomers As Library Trustees

For those individuals interested in delving more in depth into the library and how it works, opportunities exist in many libraries to join the advisory board or board of trustees. Trustees are the strong right arm for the library administrator. It is also true that trustees may go on to run for and win elected office. There is nothing better than an elected official who is already a library advocate.

Why do people become library board trustees? They have:

- a love for libraries and a desire to instill that love in others;

continued on page 144
Providing Genealogy Research Services in Public Libraries

Guidelines and Ethics

Robert I. Davidsson

Public library collections offer an array of useful information to the growing number of Americans researching the history of their families. Assisting this library user group in the specialized area of genealogy research raises unique issues and challenges for librarians.

According to a 2001 study by Maritz Marketing, a national research company, more than 120 million Americans expressed interest in finding information about their roots in the past five years. The level of their research ranged from typ-ing a surname into a search engine to exploring the stacks of the past five years. The level of their research ranged from typ-ing a surname into a search engine to exploring the stacks of the past five years. The level of their research ranged from typ-ing a surname into a search engine to exploring the stacks of the past five years. The level of their research ranged from typ-

There are many reasons for the increasing popularity of family history research. The Internet has improved the speed and accessibility to government documents, passenger lists, and family records. Communications between researchers, family members, and information providers also is enhanced through the use of e-mail and electronic document delivery.

As a nation of immigrants, there is natural curiosity about our places of origin—whether in Eastern Europe, the coast of Africa, or mainland China. Completing a family history can enhance a person's sense of well-being by helping define who they are and their place in the community and world. With some religions, identifying and connecting with ancestors is an important spiritual tenet. Tracing an ethnic origin through a “family tree” also is useful in determining the risk of hereditary diseases, according to the Mayo Clinic's Women’s HealthSource. The Mayo Clinic now offers the public online forms to help patients trace ancestors, health conditions, and causes of death.

Role of Public Libraries

Public libraries can offer family history researchers the print and electronic resources, professional guidance, and training necessary to make their genealogical journeys a success. The public demand for genealogy research assistance is present in every community in America. It is a challenge for librarians, as information professionals, to provide themselves with the knowledge and ability to assist this special client group in the library.

The first step is to inventory the library's collection for books, documents, and microfilm of potential use to genealogy researchers and patrons. The Reference and User Services Association's (RUSA) “Guidelines for a Unit or Course of Instruction in Genealogy Research at Schools of Library and Information Science” is a useful resource. Section 6.0 of the RUSA Reference Guidelines lists “Major Genealogy Research Resources” as a blueprint for librarians and their collections.

Library archives and storage rooms are often gold mines of information to family history researchers. Older editions of R.L. Polk city directories and cross-reference telephone directories are useful archival sources to family investigators, as are local business directories, academic yearbooks, and organizational membership lists.

Many public libraries archive local and national newspapers on microfilm. These are high-demand resources for genealogy buffs in search of family births, funeral notices, and obituaries. Their value to family researchers is enhanced if newspaper indexes are available online or on CD-ROM.

After the scope of a library's collection is ascertained, the level of genealogy services to patrons must be determined by library administration and reference staff. RUSA Genealogy Guidelines and Standards once again will prove a useful tool for library staff.

One library challenge involves offering genealogy research training to patrons independently, or in concert with area genealogy societies and volunteers. If library staff is used, will trained subject specialists provide genealogy services, or will all librarians assist patrons with family history projects? Here is how one library addressed these questions.

Case Study: The Palm Beach County Library System

Prior to 2002, family history searchers seeking information at the Palm Beach County (Fla.) Library System's main library or its fourteen branches were served exclusively by reference librarians stationed at each location's universal reference desk. Librarians provided referrals, title searches, and directional assistance as time and staffing permitted. Serials section associates performed obituary searches for patrons who provided mailing envelopes and postage. The main library's interlibrary loan staff assisted clients needing documents or specific titles from remote locations.

Three services were added by the library system in the winter of 2002 to improve genealogy services. In addition to the existing services, Gale Publishing's “AncestryPlus” database was offered to library users from computers located at all branches. The second service enhancement was the unveiling of the library system's interactive “Genealogy Research @ your library” Web site. The Internet site features indexes and menus listing the library's genealogy books, documents, and microforms. Indexed titles are linked to library automated card catalog records so users can search the location and status of the monograph. The Web pages of community online historical resources and genealogical organizations also are connected to the site.
The third family history enhancement was the inclusion of an E-mail Question-Response Service feature on the Genealogy Research Web site. Patrons can forward Palm Beach County genealogy queries 24/7 to the library, where a team of research librarians uses available print, Internet, and subscription database resources to provide family information or referrals.

Level of Services

The Palm Beach County Library System’s Genealogy Research Web site and electronic mail services are provided by two professional research librarians in the Government Research Service (GRS) section (see “Government Research Services in the Public Library,” Public Libraries, September/October 1997). The use of government research librarians to provide genealogy training and family locator services to the public has proved an asset to clients due to the staff’s specialized knowledge and skill in the retrieval of documents, print resources, and online government site searches.

GRS librarians provide training programs to the public and staff in the use of the Genealogy Research Web site and the AncestryPlus database. The Genealogy Research Web site receives about 700 requests or “hits” monthly from online family history users. The E-mail Q&R Service is checked daily by staff, and the library system’s twenty-four-hour response time policy is used as the benchmark.

The level of service is limited to locator searches for current and deceased residents of Palm Beach County, since local document sources are the strength and specialty of the library’s collection. Resources used include archival city directories, the Florida Office of Vital Statistics Death Index, local cemetery directory records, and the indexes and microfilm of three South Florida newspapers. Information is forwarded to clients via e-mail attachments and includes search result summaries.

The library system averages twenty e-mail requests for genealogy information per month, evenly divided between local and national researchers. As is the case with all reference services provided by the library system, genealogy research is free to the general public. Family history clients wishing to make voluntary donations are referred to the nonprofit Friends of the Library group.

Issues and Ethics

A common myth of genealogy research is that we are all descended from royalty. A Hapsburg, Romanoff, or Plantagenet is nesting in the distant past of every family tree just waiting to be discovered. In a nation populated by the descendants of impoverished and persecuted immigrants, bond-servants, and slaves, the ancestry trail often leads to a harsher reality. Family history research does not always lead to a happy ending.

In June 2001, the Wall Street Journal published a controversial article by staff reporter Elizabeth Bernstein titled “Genealogy Gone Haywire as Searchers Take to Web.” In her report, the author was critical of a $200-million-a-year electronic genealogy industry featuring self-searching Web sites, do-it-yourself DNA screening kits, and expensive subscription services which often led to inaccurate research results when used by novice family historians.

Her expose of the dark side of family research raised the issues of identity theft, invasion of privacy, and misinformation. The article warns such end results are possible when a slow-paced, thorough field of study such as genealogy goes high-tech, making personal information available immediately to the general public on the Internet. To no great surprise, the Wall Street Journal article created a firestorm of reaction on genealogy electronic discussion lists and Web sites. However, it also served a useful purpose by causing genealogy information providers to pause and review the ethics of their service.

Family history searchers have a lot at stake in their research. It is personal. It is family. It is their heritage and may influence their future. Librarians who assist this special user group know the sincere gratitude searchers express when a connection is made with their past. As information providers, librarians have both moral and professional obligations to assure the source information is reliable, of legal public domain content, and is offered in compliance with professional standards.

Standards and Policies

The mission of the American Library Association’s RUSA Genealogy Committee is to serve the interests of librarians and information specialists working in the field of genealogy through training, professional forums, and related services.

RUSA has published a series of useful “Genealogy Guidelines and Standards” including “Guidelines for Developing Beginning Genealogy Collections” (1999) for public libraries wishing to upgrade their collections. The RUSA genealogy publications are currently available online at the ALA home page.

Professional standards have been established by genealogical organizations which may prove useful to public libraries. The National Genealogical Society, based in Arlington, Virginia, offers members “Standards for Sharing Information with Others.” The standards consist of ten tenets for sharing information through speech, documents, or electronic media.

The Association of Professional Genealogists adheres to the eight statutes of its Code of Ethics that promote professionalism and require ethical conduct in all relationships “with the present or potential genealogical community.” Both genealogical codes offer standards well suited to librarians providing family history services in public libraries.

Robert I. Davidsson is a research librarian and supervisor of the Government Research Service Section of the Palm Beach County Library System; davidssonb@pbclibrary.org.

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a strong commitment and dedication to public service;
- a belief in the wide dissemination of information and ideas to everyone in the community;
- a desire to enhance life-long learning for the community through better library programs, services, and materials;
- a chance to make the community a better place to live;
- a desire to give back to the community what the community has given to them;
- an opportunity to attend educational seminars and conferences to learn skills; and
- an opportunity for personal growth and recognition in the community.

Trustees of today come from all segments of the community and bring their undoubted expertise into play to help their local libraries. They are often the best human recruiting tools that a local library possesses. They make splendid advocates for libraries on the local, state, and national level.

To be a library board trustee, one needs to:

- take the job seriously;
- give the time needed for meetings and other activities at the library;
- do homework—come to meetings prepared;
- be an advocate and spokesperson for libraries wherever that opportunity presents itself;
- demonstrate ethical behavior toward library finances, policies, procedures, staff, and fellow trustees;
- never stop learning and developing as a library trustee; and
- use the library—come to the library because it’s an enjoyable experience.

Trustees know the importance of their local library to their community since they are from the community, and they may know their local legislators or state and national ones. They have strong ties to business and can couch the library message in terms that will appeal to elected officials. They are involved in the library, but are not of the library, so become a different voice asking for help. They usually are unafraid to state their opinions. They enjoy working for and with the library or they wouldn’t be doing it. One of our favorite trustee stories is about the gentleman in Georgia whom we called for help when library funds were in danger in the Senate. He said, “Sure, I’ll call the Senator; he always calls me back.”

Library trustees, friends of libraries, librarians, and library users join together each year in Washington, D.C., for the annual National Library Legislative Day held early in May. The day of visiting members of Congress and staff has stretched into two days: Monday, the briefing day; and Tuesday, the day for visits.

In 2003, the Association of Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA) joined the District of Columbia Library Association and the American Library Association’s Washington Office in a special preview seminar on Sunday afternoon, May 11, for all new National Library Legislative Day (NLLD) attendees. The two-hour session provided tips on how to make an impact during Capitol Hill visits and help on the organization of presentations.

We encourage librarians and library trustees to attend NLLD functions in as large numbers as possible. This major presence on Capitol Hill brings attention to libraries and the issues of importance to them early in the legislative year when decisions on funding and authorization of legislation is made. It also provides a new library trustee or one who has never made the trip before with an up-close view of how groups present issues of interest to Congress. Librarians should consider this an opportunity in trustee development and education, and encourage trustees to attend.

Former First Lady Barbara Bush said at the Second White House Conference on Libraries that the greatest gift the American people ever gave themselves was libraries. In order for libraries to continue to flourish, it is critical to recruit committed people to work to continue their benefits. Now is the time to make plans to dip into a new talent pool and what could be another great gift—the baby boomers. There will be 76 million of them, so reach out, librarians and library trustees and seize the day!

Don Roalkvam is a member of the Board of Library Trustees, Indian Trails Public Library District, Wheeling, Ill.; President of the Board of Directors of the North Suburban Library System; and Regional Vice-President and member of the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates (ALTA) Board of Directors; droalkva@allstate.com. Mary Costabile retired in October 2003 as Associate Director of the ALA Washington Office; mcostabile@aol.com.

References

Secretary of State Launches Florida Electronic Library

Secretary of State Glenda Hood has announced the launch of the Florida Electronic Library, a collection of free databases and live reference services available to all Florida residents. “Through the Florida Electronic Library, all Florida residents can have access to an array of library services that no single community in Florida could afford independently,” said Hood. “It represents a partnership with local communities and assures equity of information services for all Florida’s residents, no matter where they live.”

The Florida Electronic Library is a Web site offering databases that provide access to electronic magazines, newspapers, almanacs, encyclopedias, books, and documents, as well as one-on-one online assistance from professional librarians. “We’re particularly proud of the Florida Electronic Library’s ‘Ask a Librarian’ service, which will allow real-time chat to provide answers to users’ information requests,” said State Librarian Judith Ring. “Librarians will be able to guide users through Web searches and interact with them online.”

Access is being provided through the Florida Electronic Library Web site (www.flelibrary.org) and through the Web sites of Florida’s public libraries. The Florida Electronic Library is a result of statewide collaboration between public, academic, private, and special libraries and is funded by a federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant.

For more information, contact Jenny Nash at (850) 245-6518 or jnash@dos.state.fl.us.

SOLINET and Lexington Community College Join Forces to Certify Library Paraprofessionals

The Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) has announced a partnership with Lexington (Ky.) Community College (LCC) to bring a paraprofessional certification program to library staff across the Southeast. Designed for individuals currently in or preparing for paraprofessional positions in libraries, the program grants an Academic Certificate in Library Information Technology. The LCC program uses distance technologies to deliver the training. Through an agreement with SOLINET, the training is available to individuals from SOLINET member libraries at Kentucky in-state tuition rates, regardless of location. “Paraprofessionals are playing increasingly responsible roles in library operations,” said SOLINET executive director Kate Nevis. “It is imperative that we train these paraprofessionals to be effective and knowledgeable. Lexington Community College offers an excellent program, and we are very happy to be able to make it available to our member libraries.”

The program was developed for paraprofessionals in public libraries, and many of the courses address public library topics. The courses, however, are beneficial for staff at libraries of all types and sizes. Much of the assigned work during the courses involves performing activities and doing assignments in the students’ own libraries, and the training is adaptable to most situations.

The online program is administered by Martha Birchfield, Professor at Lexington Community College, marthab@uky.edu or toll-free at (866) 774-4872, ext. 4159. Erica Waller at SOLINET, 1-800-999-8558 or ewaller@solinet.net, is available for additional information and assistance.

Movie Previews Showing on King County Library System Web Site

King County Library System (Wash.) is the first library system in the nation to offer users the ability to view movie previews on the system’s Web site, www.kcls.org. From movie classics to new releases, more than 12,000 movie titles are available to view through the new service, “At the Movies.” Users can view the previews, and if the video or DVD is in the King County Library System (KCLS) catalog, can instantly place a hold on the item.

A large, yellow ‘Place a Hold’ button indicates items that are available in the catalog. “The ability to link to our catalog makes it really easy to see what titles are available, how many holds are on a particular title and to see how quickly you can watch the movie,” says Lisa Hill, KCLS Web Services Librarian. “And although current releases are not in the catalog, users can still view the movie trailers to decide which movies to see at the theatres each weekend and escape the summertime heat.”

Users must have Windows Media Player to view the previews. To optimize users’ viewing experience, the movie previews auto-detect the speed of the user’s connection. “We are trying to raise awareness of everything the library system has to offer, including movies,” says Bill Ptacek, KCLS director. “‘At the Movies’ has already been extremely popular, receiving thousands of hits in the first week alone.”

For more information, contact Elizabeth Risser, Communications Specialist at (425) 369-3276 or erisser@kcls.org.

Arapahoe Library District Secures Increased Funds

Arapahoe County (Colo.) voters recently affirmed the need to increase library district taxes by 1.2 mills for the Arapahoe Library District, a public library system serving more than 200,000 residents in suburban Denver. The increase, which was passed with 58 percent of the vote, will generate a yearly tax revenue of about $4.5 million for the library district.

“We attribute our election success to our internal and ex-
ternal emphasis on customer service, as well as targeting key residential areas for campaigning efforts, including a suburban neighborhood where we recently opened a new 42,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art library facility,” said Library Director Eloise May.

After analyzing financial projections and conducting a survey of registered voters earlier this year, the Library District determined $4.5 million would be sufficient to maintain library services for eight to ten years through the economic downturn and avoid making severe cuts. Without the increase, the Library District would have had to reduce staff through attrition and hold fewer programs and classes. Technology upgrades would have been put off, as well.

The increased income ensures that library services will remain at the current level and, unlike some other library systems across the nation, the Arapahoe Library District will be able to avoid reductions in hours and program cuts. Once the economy improves, the Library District will use the additional funds to enhance libraries, add new technology, expand collections, and keep libraries open.

The recent mill levy increase is only the third increase in nearly forty years. The last request was eight years ago, in 1995. Between elections, the Library District built new libraries, expanded others, and introduced new services and technology, all on the operating revenues generated from its 3.7 (to be increased to 4.9 in 2004) mill levy—a record few other local governmental entities can claim.

For more information, contact Michelle Cingrani or Marlu Burkamp at (303) 798-2444.

Books for Kids

Ocean County Library (OCL) brought holiday joy to children across the county through its Books for Kids book drive. More than 2,500 books were collected and distributed this past holiday season with the help of OCL staff and a generous community. This year thousands of children throughout Ocean County (N.J.) experienced the magic of reading and being read to with new books in their hands.

All twenty branches of the OCL served as drop-off points. Five branches gave books to the Barnegat school district, St. Theresa’s Church, St. Francis’ Church, St. Gregory’s Pantry, and the Stafford Police Department toy drive. The other fifteen branches sent all of the books they collected to the Toms River headquarters branch for distribution. Representatives from Providence House, Martin House, L.E.A.P. Inc. Head Start, Ocean Inc. Head Start, Ocean County Sheriff’s Department, the Salvation Army, Jane Adams Day Care Center of Toms River, and the Interfaith Hospitality Network all received more than 100 books each.

“Literacy is our main scholastic focus. Getting beautiful books into the hands of our children is one of the most important steps in getting children to love books,” said Marinel T. Mukherjee of L.E.A.P, Inc. Margaret Krebs of Ocean Inc. explained. “We are appreciative of all of the support that we have received from the Ocean County Library. Their doors are always open to our agency, our families, and children.”

OCL once again collected nearly 20 percent of all the books collected statewide for the Books For Kids holiday book drive. Started in 1991, Books for Kids is a statewide program sponsored by the New Jersey Library Association’s (NJLA) Children’s Services Section. This project is undertaken with hope that every child in New Jersey will be able to experience the joy of reading books of their very own. Ocean County Library is glad to team up with NJLA in giving the gift of reading.

For more information, contact Nicky Goodwine, Public Relations, 732-349-6200, ext. 819, or goodwine_n@oceancounty.lib.nj.us.

Books for the Troops

The San Marcos Public Library (Texas) goes international with its Books for the Troops campaign. Boxes of books are in the mail for delivery to service men and women on remote tours of duty. The library has been flooded with paperbacks as the community responds to the campaign to ensure those serving abroad have plenty to read. Letters of support from individuals and school children are mailed with the books.

The library also accepts postage donations from individuals and service groups. Family members supply addresses of San Marcos military personnel deployed to the Middle East. For more information, contact Susan Smith at (512) 393-8213 or smith_susan@ci.san-marcos.tx.us.

Susan Smith of the San Marcos Public Library (Texas) heads to the post office with the first load of Books for Troops with the assistance of 1st Lieutenant Craig Edge of the Army Reserve’s 353rd Quartermaster Battalion.
Community Partnerships

Nann Blaine Hilyard

“No man is an island,” wrote John Donne. Nowadays, neither are libraries. Public librarians have learned the value of partnerships. Joining like-minded community agencies and organizations allows all parties to share the work and share the benefit. The agency staff who are involved gain a greater appreciation of everything the library has to offer. Long after the specific project is over they’ll remember “the library”—not only when their clients need library resources but also when the library needs support.

A partnership can be a date or a marriage. That is, it can be short and specific (imagine a date) or it can involve successive programs over years. We sought examples of partnerships of both types in libraries small and large for this “Perspectives.”

There’s No “I” in Partnership (Oh, Wait . . .)

Natalie J. Lawrence
Public Relations Manager, Charleston County (S.C.) Public Library; lawrencen@ccpl.org

“Mutually beneficial marketing partnership.” My mentor drilled those words into my head when I started out in the world of marketing. At the time I thought of those words as sales fluff, just another way to ‘wow’ potential partners with the lingo. Since then, I’ve come to realize just how important these simple words are when approaching a business with a partnership idea.

Many partnership pitches fail simply because someone forgets to spend time developing a plan that brings value to both sides. When the Charleston County Public Library approached the South Carolina Aquarium in Charleston, we knew that we had to create an agreement that served the needs of both venues. Charleston’s aquarium had been open for one year and quickly became the city’s most visited attraction. Located in a tourist area, the aquarium was practically guaranteed successful attendance numbers during the busy summer months. During the off-season it needed to depend on local residents to maintain a steady flow through its doors. Unfortunately, things didn’t go as expected, as many families couldn’t justify paying a high-ticket price for a local venue that they had already seen once. The media picked this up immediately, and one could read or hear about the drop in attendance and lack of local support on an almost daily basis. Ironically, it was this negative publicity that drew us to the prospect of a partnership with the aquarium.

With over 1.6 million visitors walking through the doors of one of our fifteen county libraries in a given year, the library knew that we had the means to reach the target market that the aquarium wanted—the locals. We were also aware that the aquarium was a viable part of the community and that, by supporting our neighbor, we were investing in much more than a partnership with short-term benefits. By joining forces with the aquarium, the library had the potential to add value to its existing services while strengthening the community by demonstrating local support. Plus, the aquarium’s mission aligned perfectly with the library’s commitment to the educational and cultural needs of Charleston County residents.

The first event we embarked on together revolved around the 2002 children’s summer reading program. The state-provided promotional artwork just happened to be a crocodile that year and the aquarium was getting ready to launch a new exhibit that would include—you guessed it—crocodiles! Armed with these small coincidences and the impressive fact that the library had historically registered more than six thousand children each summer, we approached the aquarium about an exclusive sponsorship opportunity. What we were looking for from the aquarium were free passes for any child who accomplished the goal of reading twenty hours, plus the chance for one lucky family to receive a behind-the-scenes tour of the aquatic facility. In return, the library would include the aquarium’s logo and new exhibit message on all of our promotional materials including brochures, posters, flyers, print ads, and even the library’s Web site. Both institutions split the cost of producing bookmarks that promoted the summer reading program on one side and the aquarium’s new exhibit on the other. These were distributed at all library locations, in schools, and were included in the aquarium’s educational packets which were sent to classrooms throughout the state. To enhance the educational component of the partnership, the aquarium’s staff provided animal-related programming, including crafts, at various library branches throughout the county. We reciprocated by designing and distributing a pathfinder, highlighting the animals found in the aquarium’s new exhibit.

The partnership was an enormous success. The summer reading program registration numbers went up by almost 1,000, with more than 3,000 children having read for over twenty hours. Children who previously could not afford the aquarium’s higher ticket prices finally had access to the state-of-the-art facility, and parents were motivated to take their children who had worked hard to receive the award. In turn, the aquarium was able to showcase its commitment to the community by tying into one of Charleston’s most successful and free summer programs.

Going into our third year of partnering with the aquarium, we are fortunate to have a strong relationship in place. It is given to look to one another to cross-promote activities and achieve goals. It is to obtain such a level of mutual respect that companies should strive when first approaching one another about a partnership.

It’s easy to chalk up numerous flash-in-the-pan business partnerships that seem to get what you want fast, but the end result is anything but positive. Common values and goals are something that you shouldn’t overlook when putting together a short list of potential partners, but it’s just as important, however, to keep a firm grasp on the image you’ll project when teaming up with an outside party. So while you should always...
Continuing a Century of Public/Private Partnership

Kathy Leeds
Director, Wilton (Conn.) Library; kcleeds@optonline.net

The Wilton Library, like many New England libraries, is actually a private association. For most of its 109 years it has operated via a partnership arrangement with the town government. For the last twenty years or so the town has provided about 75 percent of the library’s annual budget. Private donations provide the rest.

The longstanding “public/private partnership” between the library and the town has been refined in recent years as we prepare for a major expansion and renovation of the building. In 2003 the taxpayers approved (by a 2-1 margin!) a $4.8 million bond for the $8.7 million project.

Our partnering with local businesses has also increased in recent years. Since 1997, the library has produced a directory of all 900+ Wilton businesses. Businesses are categorized by number of employees, Standard Industrial Classification, and Chamber of Commerce membership. The directory, which is updated constantly online (www.wiltonlibrary.org/databases/busindex/busquery.html) and every other year in print, has proven to be very popular. We sell many copies of the printed directory itself ($39.95) and provide label runs ($20) to those who want to do mailings to all or a selection of Wilton’s businesses.

Local banks, car dealerships, law firms, real estate brokers, and supermarkets (among others) have all come to recognize the value of partnering with the library, in supporting its upcoming expansion and in sponsoring current programs and publications. Last year more than $50,000 was contributed to ongoing operations by local businesses alone. We have become a vital resource in the economic development of our town—not only offering services and collections to those who work in town, but also providing a unique tool to spur that development.

Collaboration with community groups has grown as a result of two databases we maintain. A directory of community organizations is maintained online (www.wiltonlibrary.org/databases/commorgs/orgsquery.htm) in much the same way as our Wilton Business Directory. Further, we produce a community calendar online that allows organizations to post their own events—as much a boon to event planners wishing to avoid date conflicts as it is to those wishing to see what’s happening. Being able to point to the directory and calendar has made our “pitch” for support to local philanthropic groups far easier. Positioned at the heart of community activity, the library is a natural conduit for their community support efforts. Recent contributions to our building fund from four groups in town (Rotary, Kiwanis, DAR, Newcomers) has accompanied ongoing support of our collections and services by others (Woman’s Club, Garden Club). The symbiotic relationship works so well for us all!

A collaborative relationship between the schools and the library has borne fruit of a less economic, but perhaps more fundamental nature. Serving as we do as the after-school and on weekends school library, we have sought to maintain a dialogue with school media specialists regarding upcoming projects and new curriculum-related resource needs.

Collaborative programming has been wildly successful. For example, last spring a fund-raiser for the library titled WaterWorks featured an original symphony composed by Chris Brubeck based on poetry about the watershed written by Wilton students. The symphony was performed with five choruses and an orchestra of professional and gifted amateur musicians, including several teachers and community members. The event was a huge success on many fronts and could not have taken place without the partnership we enjoy with the school system.

Do partnerships come with a cost? Quite often they do—if only the cost of time invested in their development. Are they worth the price? We would answer: “absolutely!” Partnering with municipal government, with business and school communities, and working with other community organizations has bolstered our claim of being the hub of the community and proven our relevance to those who fund our efforts. I cannot imagine how we would make our case without their support.

PAL PAK Connects the Public Library to the Classroom

Mary K. Weimar
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The Orland Park Public Library (OPPL) serves a growing community of 51,000 in southwest suburban Chicago. That includes fourteen schools that serve grades K–8.

In 2000 OPPL’s school liaison, Marilyn Heintz, hosted a Spring Fling at each school. Bearing chocolate, raffle prizes, gifts, and surveys, she quizzed, cajoled, and wrung information from the media specialists and teachers on what services the public library could provide for them and the students that would make a difference.

As a result, OPPL created a Teacher Loan Card policy. This allows the teachers in schools in our service area to check out materials for longer periods of time. Importantly, it is the schools, not the teachers, who are fiscally responsible for lost and damaged material. Teachers notify the library in advance to request materials on specific subjects to supplement the resources of the school media centers.

The Teacher Loan Card was the first step toward a program that now serves fourteen schools. PAL (Partners At the Library) PAKS provide supplemental material for teachers and students to enhance and extend the classroom and school library collections. Marilyn surveyed the teachers for what subjects were in need of more material than was available from their school sources, such as weather, natural disasters, sea animals, and poetry. She also consulted with the school media specialists, making clear that the purpose was not to duplicate the school media center’s collection, but to enhance it.

The PAKS are stored in plastic totes. Each has fifteen to thirty books and audiovisual materials with props such as puppets. Thematic PAKS can be reserved from September to May (excluding December). Teachers may request more than one PAK. PAL PAKS circulate for four weeks and must be returned on time in order for the next month’s requests to be filled. PAKS are delivered as part of the schools’ pick-up and delivery circuits.
Marilyn first introduced PAL PAKs in August 2001 at a continental breakfast to which classroom teachers, school principals, and district administrators were invited. Now a general school services brochure is sent each school year along with the two other brochures so that new teachers know about this great service. Also, Marilyn’s bimonthly newsletter to the teachers, PAL Pages, highlights new PAKS and explains any new service that is offered (for example, double PAK month in spring).

Our statistics showed an increase of PAK use over the 2002–2003 school year, and more units are in the process of being created. What is more significant is that only one book was lost in two years with more than 7,500 items circulating to the schools. It is because of the diligence of Marilyn, the teachers, and the stipulation that materials stay in the classroom, that this statistic is so low. Every school year, an evaluation form is provided for the teachers for suggestions and comments.

Since it began in September 2001, the PAL PAK program has been one of the Orland Park Public Library’s success stories. We have more than eighty of these thematic loan boxes from the last year, and continual evaluation is done to keep the materials current, creative, and curriculum-based. The initial cost of these PAKS ranges from $250 to $300 (based on one tote box that contained twenty to twenty-five hardcover books and one or two audiovisual items).

The PAL PAK program successfully links the public library and the schools it serves for the benefit of the children. This is an economic program that shares resources that are curriculum-based; the circulation statistics over the past two years show its popularity and success.

**The Small Rural Library as a Community Sparkplug**

**Allen Johnson**  
Director, Pocahontas County Free Libraries, Marlinton, W.Va.; allen@pocahontaslibrary.org

When I was appointed director of the Pocahontas County Free Libraries (PCFL) in May 2001, my ambition was to make PCFL a sparkplug to help revitalize our stunningly beautiful yet economically beleaguered community.

Pocahontas County is one of the largest counties in the East (almost 1000 square miles) and one of the least populated (9000 people). It has great natural beauty: forested mountains commanding vistas over lush green valleys and sparkling streams. Tourism is a growth industry. Wages are low overall. Amenities like shopping malls, colleges, and conventional cultural and infrastructure resources are far away.

Mutually beneficial partnerships are the key that a rural library must turn to open the door to community progress. Librarians must actively get to know the people of their schools and local community groups. Because the infrastructure is thin, community agencies must work with one another to advance the common good.

The school system is a key partner for any small public library. Two of PCFL’s branches are used as the libraries for nearby elementary schools. PCFL librarians maintain working relationships with the high school and middle school staff and their school librarians so that our collections are relevant to the curriculum. Two PCFL branches host after-school programs.

Additionally, the schools often use PCFL’s meeting room for faculty meetings, teacher training, and even Board of Education sessions.

The Opera House Foundation is a group that recently restored a ninety-year-old building that had been used decades ago for live performances. PCFL has been cosponsoring film screenings and speakers, and providing audiovisual equipment for some of their events. PCFL is also a key member of the county Family Resource Network (FRN), a consortium of social agencies, schools, law enforcement, churches, civic groups, and health groups whose purpose is to work together in strengthening families and children. A current project involves the libraries promoting drug awareness education through literature display units. The libraries are also building extensive parenting education book and video collections.

Although small libraries cannot even dream of acquiring expansive collections such as those of large urban libraries, a small library can focus on extensively developing one or two specialties as a resource for their region. One of PCFL’s most exciting programs has been its active role in acquiring, distributing, and promoting West Virginia and Appalachia books and films to local and statewide library patrons. PCFL also sponsors public events for writers, filmmakers, and historical character portrayals. Another such endeavor is the Pearl S. Buck E Pluribus Unum Collection, named after the Nobel Literature Laureate and champion for ethnic and racial harmony whose birthplace is near our Hillsboro library branch.

Boosting the arts and culture of a community is a valuable service for any small rural library. PCFL has partnered with a local filmmaker, B. J. Gudmundsson, to create two feature documentaries about local history. From beginning to end, PCFL assisted the filmmaker in research, funding, and presentation to the community. Future film projects are on the drawing board. PCFL is also helping to preserve local history by participating in the national Veteran’s Oral History Project, as well as planning to produce digital film archives of some of our county’s older citizens as they tell stories from their lives.

PCFL has directly enabled several persons to pursue college education degree programs through its satellite linkups. On another spectrum, PCFL is offering adult literacy tutoring through the Laubach Literacy program, utilizing both state grant in aid funds as well as its own money. Over a year ago the GED testing center closed in Pocahontas County, so PCFL applied for and became a certified GED test site, the only library-based center in West Virginia.

PCFL supports economic initiatives. Pocahontas Woods is a new county cooperative seeking to encourage local entrepreneurs who would develop and market value-added wood products such as furniture from the top quality hardwoods for which our region is renowned. PCFL has acquired and is promoting an extensive and outstanding line of furniture-making books. PCFL also makes a point to help local and state-run bookstores with some of our book orders.

Fund-raising is a challenge for rural libraries. With an operating budget of $185,000 to operate four branches, PCFL has to be efficient and creative with resources. During the past twelve years the PCFL Board of Trustees built three library facilities while significantly expanding programming, staff, and collections.

Small rural libraries can be a catalyst for positive growth by knowing the pulse of their neighborhoods and by courageously stepping into the waters, with their partners, to advance creative ideas that inspire all.
Community Partnerships at Virginia Beach (Va.) Public Library

Carolyn Caywood
Area Librarian, Virginia Beach (Va.) Public Library; ccaywood@vbgov.com

One thing leads to another, especially with partnerships, I’ve found. In an era when a lot of people are still “bowling alone” as sociologist Robert D. Putnam calls the decline of social capital, those whom you encounter through one partnership are likely to be involved in several other civic activities. Once you start making connections, you’re more likely to become overextended than to run out of leads.

After working with the African-American History Month committee (which began as a library system project and now includes other city departments), I suggested that we put together a program on black journalists. That led us to discover a local multicultural association of journalists who wanted to raise community understanding of the press. Together, we’ve held programs on how news decisions are made, created guides for getting coverage of alternative news and views, and most recently hosted a forum with Torie Clarke and embedded reporters from the Iraq conflict. The outcome is improved media literacy. (It doesn’t hurt to have increased contacts with the press either.)

Another path led to the creation of a History Trail in our community. Periodically, the city government holds public hearings on its Outdoor Plan and then publishes a report. While scanning the report, I noticed a mention of my library’s neighborhood. An attendee had raised the idea of a bike trail to feature the Colonial era homes near the library. With the library’s local history resources, this seemed like a project worth pursuing. I offered a meeting place and researched stakeholders. The outcomes have been closer relations with the community, a map for distribution, and an annual celebration where my library awards commemorative patches (funded by one of the house museums) to trail visitors.

Our pursuit of community partnerships began about fifteen years ago when a new central library opened, freeing our branch to focus on its immediate neighborhood. Unsure how to get started, we scheduled a round of civic league visits, which were informative but did not lead further. On the whole that has been typical of our experience—most of our partnerships have been with nontraditional groups sharing a specific interest. In some cases, we’ve organized the group ourselves, for example, our teen advisory group. More recently, we merged with the Subregional Library for the Blind, which introduced us to another field of potential partners.

We haven’t always been quick to see an opportunity. When an elementary school invited us to join its “adopt a school” program, the relationship felt awkward as we were both funded by the same taxpayers. It took a while to work out ways to provide support that did not involve shuffling government funds. We provide display space for school projects, deposit collections, and a presence at school events. In turn, our fourteen school partners make a real effort to give us advance warning of assignments.

Perhaps the most difficult and productive partnership has been with our police station that shares our site. It’s been difficult because the police department has a policy of relocating the captains in charge of each station every two years. On the other hand, a commitment to “community policing” means that each precinct has a citizen advisory board. We both needed to replace our aging buildings, so we worked together on a referendum. It failed, but together we built a core of citizen support and got funding through the regular capital plan. To save money, we were going to share the new building, but those supportive citizens met with us and proposed that the city buy additional land to make space for two buildings. It wouldn’t have happened without that partnership. Our joint groundbreaking was a celebration of partnerships and community support, with costumed interpreters from the historic houses serving refreshments and the police captain reading picture books at a family storytelling.

Community partnerships are a major facet of our municipal government’s approach to doing business, so we’ve never had opposition to focusing resources on these projects. Because the resources available are only those of any branch library, we’ve sometimes had difficult choices to make. Nonetheless, the long-term benefits more than compensate our efforts. And it continues to be a lot of fun!

Vision and Visibility: Community Partnerships and the Urban Library

Elliot L. Shelkrot
President and Director, The Free Library of Philadelphia, Pa.; shelkrote@library.phila.gov

If our library system received a report card, we hope it would include the words “works well with others.” For us, cooperation is not just an efficient and socially beneficial way of getting things done and of extending our reach, it’s also a means of becoming better known as an experienced solution provider.

As Hedra Packman, our chief of Public Services Support, observes: “Providing informal education and literacy support is not enough; we need to be seen as a leader in these fields and as skilled at solving related community problems. That’s what community partnerships allow.” So acting on our vision through community partnerships not only expands our programs but also increases our visibility in these roles. And being seen as important to our partners and to the public makes it easier to gain their support for the library and its work.

In our role as a leading institution for informal education, forming partnerships with Philadelphia’s other major cultural institutions helps us expand our own cultural audiences as well as demonstrate our leadership in informal education. For example: this past year we promoted the opening of the new National Constitution Center and provided programs about it for use with our after-school project in branch libraries (see LEAP, below); and next spring we’ll join the center and the National Archives in programming for the fiftieth anniversary of Brown versus Board of Education.

Another example, our summer reading program for children and teens—which last summer had 54,000 participants—provided, as a reward for reading, free family passes to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In the first year, the museum found that 1,569 passes were used, approximately 50 percent of them by first-time museum visitors. In response to this success, the program has been extended to include three other leading Philadelphia museums.

In both of these cases, our partners gain new visitors, the library grows in impact as the public sees us in a wider role, and
all partners gain a sense of being a team able to hatch new ideas for working together.

The library’s own most popular “in-house” adult cultural program is the Free Library of Philadelphia Lectures, which each year brings twenty to thirty eminent writers to speak to sell-out crowds. Partnerships with area literary organizations strengthen the program through cooperative promotion and cost-sharing. A local book store participates in joint advertising, sells copies of the speakers’ books in our lobby, and gives us discounts on copies we buy for special gifts.

Other programs providing informal education include:

- One Book, One Philadelphia, new last winter, which we sponsor in partnership with the Office of the Mayor. Behind the dramatic success of the inaugural year of this program was our partnership with fifteen other corporate, governmental, and organizational sponsors and more than fifty community partners; and

- the Earned Income Tax Credit program, in which we partner with the IRS and a citywide consortium of agencies to provide free tax-filing assistance to low-income families qualified to receive that disturbingly little-known benefit.

In our role as a primary source of expert literary support, we provide many free literacy-support programs that reach beyond usual library service and support to schools. Here are the most extensive:

- For the benefit of preschoolers: Our early childhood development program, Books Aloud! which was originally funded by a foundation, has proved so valuable that it is now funded by the city. Operating in libraries and in child-care and community centers, Books Aloud! fosters early literacy skills in young children not only by providing books but primarily by training care-givers to stimulate those skills.

- For adults: The most extensive network of partnerships has been developed by the thirty-five-year-old Reader Development Program (RDP). Rather than providing literacy training, RDP identifies and provides, without charge, the best available learning materials for adults who seek to improve their literacy skills, including materials for taking the GED, for learning English as a second language, and for gaining job skills or life skills.

As you’d guess, many of our programs provide both informal education and some measure of literacy support. Here are just two of them.

- LEAP, our after-school program, operates at fifty-three libraries and annually reaches 85,000 children and teens. The program is largely powered by 200 paid and trained Teen Leadership Assistants (TLAs), under specialized adult leaders. Like Books Aloud!, LEAP has proved so useful that it is now funded by the city; the program partners with the school district and other organizations.

- From our experience each year with those 200-plus Teen Leadership Assistants, we have developed specialized expertise in empowering teens. Besides help with homework, TLAs provide computer assistance and cultural and technology programming. In one of many partnerships at work in this program, approximately fifty of our TLAs take part under the auspices of the city agency that distributes Welfare-to-Work funds.

As all this shows, partnerships are important to us. They provide the legs that carry the Free Library’s outreach farther—and the sandwich boards that advertise our wares.

Community Partnerships at the LaCrosse (Wisc.) Public Library

Patricia Boge
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Do we partner? Do we ever! For more than two decades the La Crosse Public Library has worked in partnership with a variety of local, state, and national organizations.

One of our first partners was the Wisconsin Humanities Committee. We started working with humanities scholars from the University of Wisconsin La Crosse and Viterbo University. Specialists in English, history, sociology, geography, ethics, art, dance, and music led book discussions, lectures, performances, and public affairs programming. As our experience grew, we brought in scholars from Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa as well as Western Wisconsin Technical College. Our programs have included Read One Book, Steinbeck Centennial, our annual music series, the American Experience current affairs and history series, Human Side of Medicine, Native American literature series, and more.

This initial foray into successful partnering led to other partnerships. In the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, there was an initiative to involve other types of libraries in dialogue. Personnel from academic, school, public, and special libraries throughout our seven-county Winding Rivers Library System came together to form an “interlibrary” council. This group encouraged exchange of materials and knowledge among its members. Twenty-five years later, although there’s no longer a formal council, the libraries continue to communicate and exchange with each other. “Info passes” allow the public to use the two university libraries, the technical college library, and many special libraries.

In December 2003, the Blood Center, the exclusive blood provider for both our local hospitals, held a blood drive in the library auditorium. Staff were encouraged to participate on work time. The library will be a blood drive site every eight weeks.

Since the Literacy Coalition of La Crosse was founded in 2001 our library has been a participating partner. We have developed a collection of high-interest/low vocabulary materials and have promoted this among other members of the Coalition. One of our branch libraries allows its telephone number to be used for the Coalition contact. Just recently we have provided office space for the Coalition in our main library at no charge. We have always provided private study rooms for literacy tutoring.

We have good partnerships with the city of La Crosse, too. Each year we insert a library flyer into the city’s recycling brochure highlighting library services, including our Web page. We also work with the city’s Information Technology department on joint purchasing and network access.

La Crosse has a sizable Hmong population, and the library has worked with their local agency to host programs in our auditorium, art shows, an open house, and board meeting, brochures translated into Hmong, special library tours, and increased purchasing of Hmong materials, including videos as they become available.
Twenty-five years ago we developed a relationship with the La Crosse School District to host the all-city middle and elementary art shows during National Art Month in April. Our two branch libraries host the elementary shows, and the main library provides the space for the three middle public schools. The libraries vibrate during this month with colorful, creative art pieces all over the building. Since then, the Catholic middle and high school also have a month. Because we have such good exhibit space, which we offer at no charge to the community, other organizations (La Crosse Arts and Crafts, Woodworkers Group, Eastbank Artists, Pleine Air Artists, to name a few) book our display areas on a regular basis. The La Crosse Quilters Guild provides a rotating collection of quilts in the balcony well of the main library on a year-round basis.

Staff on an individual basis are active in various nonprofit boards, organizations, and charitable groups. Examples include the Grand Excursion for 1994, Polar Plunge, Heart Run, Cancer Run, Rotary, Optimists, and the Humane Society.

You name it and we’re out there in the community building good will and name recognition. We actively seek opportunities to partner!

**Rewarding Partnerships in Bozeman**

Cindy Christin
Children’s Librarian, Bozeman (Mont.) Public Library; christin@mtlib.org

It is hard to imagine anything more connected to the community than the public library; it’s a dynamic partnership between all the people who make up a community and the institution itself. We learned a lot about our community through the strategic planning process, which included focus groups, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, and a visioning process, all involving members of the community in addition to staff, Board of Trustees, and other librarians.

Four service responses were chosen to fill our community’s needs: General Information, Lifelong Learning, Current Topics and Titles, and Information Literacy. From these came the library vision statement, the mission statement, and our annual goals and objectives.

Our library’s goals for community service are best embodied in the mission statement that developed from our planning process: “The Bozeman Public Library provides the community with free, open and equal access to general information on a broad array of topics; resources to promote personal growth and lifelong learning; popular materials to meet cultural and recreational needs; and the training needed to find and evaluate and use information effectively.”

One important way we achieve our goals, with limited staff and budget, is through partnerships. For example, Bozeman Public Library has had a long relationship with our local university. Its faculty present lectures and programs here at the library, and our staff present classes on various subjects to education students. The English Club helps with children’s programs, and other departments have worked on cooperative projects as well. We work with others in our diverse community to plan multicultural story times, a public celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., along with Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Chinese New Year programs.

The library belongs to the Chamber of Commerce and provides teaching assistance for its course on business plans. The local Sunrise Rotary Club provides funds each year for international materials and collaborates on the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) program to distribute free books to children. Our staff teaches computer classes at the Senior Center; participates in the local Wellness Fair, Women’s Fest and Kids’ Fest events; and does outreach programs to schools. We also partner with InterMountain Therapy Dogs for a weekly program in which young readers practice their skills by reading to a dog.

The Friends of the Library and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) hold semi-annual used book sales at the library, and our local NPR station has a recording booth in the library meeting room to broadcast live programs and interviews.

We hope to expand what we already provide when we move into a new library in 2005. The 51,000-square-foot building will include a large public plaza, which will provide a location for cultural events and civic ceremonies. Families will be able to enjoy an outdoor Shakespeare play in the summer or ice skate in the winter. The library borders Lindley Park, a winter hub for skiing and sledding, and the summer venue for the Sweet Pea Festival, which attracts 30,000 people for three days of music, dance, and theater. We will be a part of an important trail system called “Main Street to the Mountains,” making it possible for patrons to walk, bike, or ski to the library. The expanded building, including tutorial rooms, computer labs, meeting rooms, a coffee shop, and gallery space, will help us meet the needs of our growing community.

We are always receptive to new partnerships, and feel that we are able to provide services and programs above and beyond what our budget allows by collaborating with others. We were honored to have received the IMLS award for community service and to be recognized for the role that libraries fill in the development of strong, dynamic communities.

**Wrap Up**

Have you invited someone in your community to consider a partnership with your library? Don’t wait to be asked. Pick up the phone and say, “How can my library work with your agency to serve our shared clientele?” Great things may result!

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**Reference**

Trend-Watching in Young Adult Literature

An Interview with Michael Cart

Amy Alessio

Michael Cart is one of the leading experts in young adult literature today. Known across the country for his engaging workshops, he is passionate about teaching interested professionals all about this exciting area of literature. A past president of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) and the president of the National Council of Teachers of English Assembly on Literature for Adolescents, a regular contributor to Booklist, and a former director of the Beverly Hills Public Library, Michael continues to provide important and lasting contributions to librarians and teachers of young adults. In addition, he edits at least one anthology of short stories each year, such as 911: The Book of Help, and writes original fiction. He stays current with new technologies to reach librarians and educators, such as in his role as consultant to Esbo's NoveList database, where he developed more than one hundred genre lists of recommended titles for young adults. Now he is creating yet another venue to bring quality literature to teens, in the new literary journal Rush Hour. Michael discussed his work with Amy Alessio in October 2003.

Public Libraries: What aspect of serving young adults ignited the focus of your career? Did anything from your teen years spark ideas?

Michael Cart: I came to an interest in serving young adults through discovering young adult literature in the late 1980s. Not long after that I was invited to teach a seminar at Texas Woman's University on the public library and social change. That was the catalyst for my related discovery of the horrifying number and range of risk factors in the lives of contemporary YAs. That, in turn, led to the conviction that libraries could play a redeeming role in kids' lives and a decision to become involved with YALSA, hoping to make a difference—in libraries and lives—on a national level. On the more personal level, I'm not sure what role my own teen years played in this except that I do have total emotional recall of how those years felt, and I will do anything to try to spare today's kids from similar agonies.

PL: Please name some of the favorite projects you have worked on or been involved with during your career.

MC: Playing a part in the creation of the Michael Printz Award has to rank near the top, but the challenges and opportunities of serving as YALSA president were also tremendously gratifying. I take great satisfaction, too, in having overseen the construction of a new Beverly Hills Public Library when I was its director, and I took huge pleasure in co-producing and hosting, for more than twenty years, the cable television author interview program “In Print.”

PL: How many YA books do you read each year? Do you have some all-time favorite titles and authors?

MC: I don't keep an accurate tally of how many YA books I read, but I suppose that in a typical year I read at least four or five a week, which translates into roughly 200 to 250 per year. This doesn't count all of the books I start to read and abandon after twenty-five or so pages. Life is too short to waste time on bad books, and there are still a lot of those! I also read reviews omnivorously and, since I'm in my second year of service on YALSA's Alex Award Committee, I read widely in the field of adult books, too. A major problem as I have gotten older is that I can't read in the evenings (I keep falling asleep!), so I've taken to getting up at about 4 every morning and reading until 7 or 8 o'clock. I also read in the late afternoon. Some all-time favorites include Robert Cormier's Chocolate War, Bruce Brooks's What Hearts, Francesca Lia Block's Weetzie Bat, Stephen Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower, David Levithan's Boy Meets Boy, David Almond's Skellig, Aidan Chambers' Postcards from No Man's Land, and Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy.

PL: What are some trends that you see now in YA lit? What holes need to be filled in the genre? What are some recurring elements of an ideal YA book?

MC: I'm a professional trends watcher, which means I keep a running list of new trends. At last count I had twenty-four! Obviously the field of young adult literature is a happening place. I find several of the trends to be of particular interest: the crossover phenomenon (books being targeted at people in their late teens and early twenties), the merging of the short story and the novel, and the renaissance of poetry. There are still holes, of course: we need more literature about newly immigrant peoples written from within their experience; we also need more good books about the experience of being a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning teen—though we are finally beginning to see some small progress in this quarter. The ideal teen book, now as always, is one that tells the unspiring truth in ways that are fresh, inventive, and innovative.

PL: What is Rush Hour, and what are some of the themes it will cover?
Michael Cart

MC: *Rush Hour* will be a cutting-edge literary journal published for a crossover readership, i.e., people ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-two. Themes for the first five issues are “Sin,” “Bad Boys,” “Face,” “Reckless,” and “Good Girls.”

PL: Where did you get the idea for *Rush Hour*? How did it evolve?

MC: The idea for *Rush Hour* had a very long germination. It came out of talks I had with George Nicholson (then head of books for young readers at Bantam Dell Delacorte) back in the early 1990s when YA was being pronounced near death. We shared a conviction that this pronouncement was a bit premature and that the salvation of the genre would be to focus on creating real literature for not only the traditional readership but also for a more expansive one. We were ahead of the curve back then; but when George became my literary agent five or so years ago, we revived our discussions and, in due course, the real world caught up with our vision.

PL: How often will issues be published? Will teens or libraries subscribe?

MC: The journal will be published twice a year, in the spring and fall, by Random House. It will not be sold by subscription but will be published simultaneously in hardcover (for the institutional market) and in trade paperback (for the retail market).

PL: How do you select contributors? Will there be recurring features like book reviews?

MC: As for contributors, I select them in a variety of ways. For the first issue, I turned to some personal favorites like Brock Cole, Joan Bauer, Chris Lynch, Ron Koertge, Sonya Sones, and Emma Donoghue. I continue that semi-self-indulgent practice, but I’m also now receiving submissions from editors and agents and am having the joy of discovering, in this way, new talent, since I want *Rush Hour* to be a vehicle for introducing new voices to readers. And I’m always finding new talent through my own reading. There will be no recurring features in the journal; what will be recurring, I hope, are the eclectic mix of its content and the artistic excellence of everything that readers will find in it.

PL: Will you be responsible for editing the journal from now on?

MC: Yes, I will be responsible for editing the journal from now on—however long that turns out to be. I think of this as my calling and I’m happy to have discovered it.

PL: You are an extremely busy man; what other projects are you working on now?

MC: I continue to work on other projects—I teach at Texas Woman’s University and UCLA; I write a monthly column and review books for *Booklist* magazine. I’m still involved with ALA, and I travel constantly to lecture about YA literature and services.

PL: I know you are active in many literary societies, including some surprising ones.

MC: I’m active in a number of organizations and societies. I’m president-elect of ALAN, for example, and I’m still involved with the Friends of Freddy. Of course, everyone knows this is the international Freddy the Pig fan club . . . don’t they? And everyone knows that all twenty-six of the Freddy books by the late, great Walter R. Brooks, are all now back in print, thanks to The Overlook Press . . . don’t they?

PL: What can public libraries do to encourage older teens to read for fun?

MC: That’s a toughie, but I do think that more teens are potential readers than we give them credit for being. I base this, in part, on my own experience of talking with them and also, on the results of the annual YALSA/Smartgirl.com survey that’s done in concert with Teen Read Week. And in that connection, one thing that libraries can do is to observe Teen Read Week with special programs and events. Getting kids together with authors, for example, is an effective way to excite their reading interest, as is giving them regular opportunities to talk about their reading—with other teens and with adults. This can be an informal process or it can be formalized as a teen book discussion group. Also, involving teens with the selection of materials is a proven winner. Ideally this will result in the creation of wide-ranging collections with proven teen appeal.

PL: Teen programs at many libraries are run by staff with other duties in different departments. What are some good ways to get familiar with new YA books if librarians are not able to read the bulk of the titles coming out?

MC: No one has time to read every YA book that is published, though it’s important to read as widely as possible, retrospectively as well as currently. Context is a great help in assessing the relative quality of new titles. It’s important to read reviews (everyone should try to read *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and VOYA for starters). Another way to learn about new titles, new trends, and exceptional new reading opportunities is to subscribe to YALSA-BK, YALSA’s book-based electronic discussion list.

**Amy Alessio** is the Teen Coordinator of the Schaumburg Township District Library and a member of the YALSA Board of Directors. She interviewed Michael Cart in October 2003. If you have any suggestions of authors you would like to see featured in Book Talk, or if you are interested in volunteering to be an author-interviewer, contact the contributing editors: Kathleen Hughes is Managing Editor of Public Libraries, and Brendan Dowling is the Editorial Assistant. Both can be reached at the Public Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; khughes@ala.org, bdowling@ala.org.
Refgrunting

Steven M. Cohen

Have you ever had one of those days at the reference desk when patrons were asking the strangest questions? Or the opposite? Were the queries that you received so boring that you had to start researching Stumpers (http://domain.dom.edu/depts/gsllis/stumpers) queries just to keep your mind fresh? How many times today has a patron asked you where the bathroom is? How many Internet sign-ups did you have today? Wouldn’t it be fun to make a list of all of the questions that were asked on a particular day or shift at the reference desk? Nothing lengthy, just a short descriptive list of what happened, what types of questions were asked, and/or funny anecdotes.

If you think that this exercise would help relieve a bit of stress, take a look at the weblog of “Peter Burd” (not his real name) who coined the term “refgrunt” and started his Refgrunt Weblog (http://refgrunt.blogspot.com) in May of 2003. In an e-mail conversation with Peter, he mentioned, “I caught the blog bug, and I wanted to vent about my job, like many bloggers. I thought writing about reference work could be entertaining but bug, and I wanted to vent about my job, like many bloggers. I thought writing about reference work could be entertaining but didn’t want to go into the details of each transaction because I thought writing about reference work could be entertaining but didn’t want to go into the details of each transaction because I planned to blog every desk shift.”

A refgrunt has no true definition, but can be thought of as short blurbs of daily encounters at the library, especially the reference desk (although I can see it moving beyond reference transactions and into circulation). An example of a refgrunt can be as follows:

- Internet sign-up.
- No, we don’t have Carrie by Stephen King, but I’ll interloan it for you.
- Sign-up for Drivers Education class.
- Newspapers from 1995.
- Smelly book donations.
- Don’t run.
- Please walk.
- He wants the creators and storyline for “Annie.”
- Contemporary literary criticism.
- List of books by Joyce Carol Oates.
- Printer broken.
- Machine ate my quarter.

One of the important aspects of refgrunting, for obvious reasons, is the anonymity factor. Keeping reference transactions private has been a staple of our jobs for years and has been played out in the media a lot since September 11th. The anonymous postings of a librarian to a weblog about general questions, though, shouldn’t cross any privacy issue lines. In addition, the administrators of the library would probably question “refgrunting” if the writer and library were to be made public.

Peter Burd states, “First, no one at work knows I’m doing it (apart from Librarian Y, who is sworn to secrecy and couldn’t care less anyway). I doubt that there would be serious trouble, but I’d rather not take the chance. Second, I doubt that many of our patrons would be pleased to hear they’re the butt of jokes, though I try to mock the question and not the patron.” Thus, my advice is twofold: (1) Keep refgrunting anonymous and don’t tell anyone that you are doing it; and (2) it would be best to keep your refgrunts general. For example, I wouldn’t post a grunt that mentions any towns, counties, or community-specific landmarks.

Since Burd started his refgrunt weblog in May of 2003, many librarians (especially those who write weblogs) have joined in on the fun and have refgrunted numerous reference transactions. In fact, many have posted questions that they received via virtual reference, and the concept has started to peek into local and state library newsletters. In addition, Blake Carver has started Refgrunt.com (www.refgrunt.com), a collaborative weblog based on the Metafilter software. Anyone can create an account and start refgrunting their daily reference episodes.

Peter believes that refgrunting has been embraced by reference librarians because “it resonates with many because of shared experience. Most of my e-mail comes from librarians who say, ‘Your patrons are just like ours.’” A sense of camaraderie at public libraries all over the country (and the world for that matter) can be established with refgrunting. It makes our jobs easier knowing that others have experienced the same issues that we have. Also, while refgrunts are not lengthy paragraphs, they may be helpful to other librarians who may have had a similar question.

While it may be stretching the point a bit, refgrunting is so new in its development that its format may change over the next few years and become a FARQ (Frequently Asked Reference Question) database for public libraries. Who better to organize such a list than front-end reference workers from our nation’s public libraries?

Which can lead us to the question, “What does refgrunting tell us about our jobs?” Are the questions asked by our patrons a corollary to our training in library school? Does the fact that more questions are being asked about the location of the bathroom say anything about the layout of the library building? If patrons repeatedly ask about certain aspects of the Internet sign-up procedures, maybe there is a need for these procedures to be written down and left on the desk for patrons to take. In addition, are a number of students asking for a particular book or questions on a particular topic? Maybe it’s time to set up a link collection on that topic for the library Web page. This issue has become synonymous with public libraries for years and refgrunting may have a part in providing the background and archives of these issues. Think about it. Peter Burd has been archiving his reference queries since May 2003. Wouldn’t it be useful for his library director (or the head of his reference serv-
ices department) to see these questions? If done in a more form-fitting method, with more formal writing, refgrunting can be a useful tool.

One side project that has come out of the refgrunting movement is “congrunting,” which is a refgrunt-type post about sessions attended at a conference. (For an example of a congrunt, see this weblog post from Eli Edwards [http://edwards.orcas.net/~misseli/blog/archives/000044.html], who attended the ALA Midwinter Meeting in San Diego). Congruting was coined by Michael Stephens, a librarian at St. Joseph Public Library in Indiana, during a recent conference and the term has stuck. While congrunting is not as popular as refgrunting (it always takes a while for new technologies to catch on), it will only be a matter of time before congrunting becomes part of the mainstream library publishing world. Traditionally, after a conference has taken place, trade journals (i.e., Public Libraries or American Libraries) will publish a synopsis of what transpired at the national conferences. Most of the time, however, the publications are published many months after the conference has ended. The associations do publish reviews on their Web sites, although this is not done that often and is most likely written by someone hired by the organization to write such a review. I would rather get pieces written by attendees who offer a nonbiased viewpoint of the happenings. Congruting can come in handy here in that the attendee can quickly jot down notes (including but not limited to quotes from the speaker and thoughts about the presentation) and publish the congrunt directly online.

So, the question remains, is refgrunting for you? Do you want to take the time to jot down the important, funny, and outrageous reference questions that you receive from patrons? And, even if you want to, do you have the stamina to do it every day? The good thing about refgrunting is that you, the grunter, can choose your own path. That said, if you make the decision to start refgrunting, the easy part is setting up the means to the end. This can be done using three methods: First, you can set up a user name and password at refgrunt.com and start posting within minutes. Second, you can start a weblog like Peter Burd using Blogger (www.blogger.com) or any other weblog software. Last, while I understand that this is a column about the Internet, you can always do all of this offline: buy yourself a little notebook and jot down some refgrunts if you have “downtime.” It might be a stress-relieving exercise.

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Resources

Stumpers
http://domin.dom.edu/depts/gslis/stumpers
Refgrunt Weblog
http://refgrunt.blogspot.com
Refgrunt.com
www.refgrunt.com
Eli Edwards Congruting Post
http://edwards.orcas.net/~misseli/blog/archives/000044.html
Blogger
www.blogger.com

Is Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library?

The PLA/ALSC (Association for Library Service to Children) “Every Child Ready to Read” project provides research-based resources for library systems of all sizes to use in disseminating early childhood information to parents, child-care providers, early childhood educators, children’s advocates, and political decision makers. Every Child Ready to Read is more than a long-term ambition. Promoting early literacy is what your library already works to achieve on a daily basis. Now you can use these proven techniques to help you reach this important goal.

Children begin to learn early literacy skills at birth. Many parents and other caregivers, though, need to be taught the importance of early literacy and how to develop critical pre-reading skills so that every child enters school ready to learn to read. Research from this project has been incorporated into three “Every Child Ready to Read” programs that are ready for you to present to parents and care givers of:

- Early Talkers—Children from birth to two-years-old
- Talkers—Two- and three-year-olds
- Prereaders—Four- and five-year-olds

Everything you need for all three programs comes conveniently packaged in one easy-to-use kit that includes:

- Training DVD and manual
- Resource notebook
- Every Child Ready to Read brochures
- Four program videos
- Every Child Ready to Read poster
- Cards for the “Say it Fast, Say it Slow” game
- 180 bookmarks to promote the program

For ordering information, or more information about this project, visit www.pla.org.
Weeding the E-Book Collection

A. Paula Wilson

A great deal of information can be found in the library literature about electronic books including the various models of service, available formats, acquisition, and use of e-books. However, practical guidelines for weeding to maintain a responsive e-book collection are lacking.

Because e-books do not consume valuable shelf space, maintenance of this collection is easily pushed to the back burner. The visibility of e-books has improved as libraries have managed to publicize the collection through the inclusion of MARC records in the catalog and seamless access from the library Web site; however, e-books displayed in a result list with older copyright dates, especially in certain subject areas, stick out just as cracked spines from books shelved on their fore-edge.

When should libraries begin to weed e-books? Weeding should be a planned activity and, as such, should start as soon as the library offers its online book collection. Libraries should develop criteria in order to evaluate the use of the collection so that when it is time to weed, a process has already been established. Libraries may even incorporate e-books into the existing weeding schedule, assigning librarians parts of the collection depending on its size.

Librarians may feel that the collection has not been used enough to warrant the work entailed in the weeding process and may rely entirely on increased circulation to determine when to start to weed. There are several other factors contributing to usage of the collection that should be considered, such as awareness, acceptance, and seamless access. Libraries are in the beginning stages of the acceptance of this media, and the more comfortable staff is with it the more they will promote it to their customers. Librarians should ask themselves if the e-book format is understood and accepted by staff. Additionally, new formats and easier access have allowed libraries to find nontraditional customers who may want to read and access books online. If that group has not yet discovered the wonders of the library’s online collection, then that is one indication the collection has not reached its potential audience. Many factors determine the success of a library’s e-book collection, but regardless of its usage, the collection must be systematically and continuously weeded to retain its usefulness. When customers do come to check out and read an e-book, they expect the same level of service provided to customers of print collections, a collection responsive to their needs.

There are differences and similarities in weeding print and e-book collections. Most obviously, there is no need to find a book truck, markers, or slips of paper to record the disposition of an e-book. A librarian weeding e-books will, however, need a computer and quite possibly spreadsheet software and access to the library catalog. Some vendors may provide librarians with a way to manage their collections through acquisitions and purchase; however, this author is unaware of any vendor-provided solution to weeding an e-book collection.

Still, some librarians may ask, “Why do we need to weed e-books?” If books are not taking up shelf space and do not physically deteriorate, then what motivates libraries to update their online book collections? Traditional criteria can be applied to nonfiction titles like currency, scope of topics, and usage. Additional criteria specific to online collections, such as format and functionality, must also be applied. Fiction, unlike nonfiction, may be timeless since physical deterioration of an online collection is not applicable. However, if purchasing models that exist in print, such as leasing programs for bestselling titles, can work for e-books, then perhaps some fiction titles can be returned to the publisher once the initial interest in a title wanes.

Many libraries’ opening e-book collections were not necessarily based on a balanced collection, but the informational needs of potential customers and their reading habits. For example, the group that would most embrace online reading would probably be those most comfortable with its technology. Consequently, libraries purchased a great deal of technical titles. Librarians also chose to focus on areas of the collection that would satisfy last-minute “it’s due tomorrow” homework questions like books on countries and cultures whose print counterparts are continuously in high demand.

Additionally, the portability of e-books has enabled librarians to feel more at ease when ordering fiction. During the introduction of e-books, various vendors could not support their portability and, in some cases, offline reading. Since librarians did not envision their customers cozying up to a monitor to read the latest Harry Potter title, the focus tended to be on nonfiction e-books where users could read the book just as librarians use a reference title. Where acceptance of this new media has caught on, a broad selection of materials outside of the aforementioned topics has appeared, especially reference titles. The impetus for purchasing the collection for a specific audience offers collection development librarians additional information when determining the criteria to apply when weeding.

What are the criteria we use and how do they apply to e-books? In most cases, traditional criteria such as accuracy of the information and subject coverage may apply to weeding e-book collections; however, special consideration is needed in several areas. Obviously, criteria based on physical aspects of weeding, such as ragged and ripped books, cracked bindings, missing pages, defaced or highlighted text do not apply. Due to copyright restrictions only one customer can read an e-book at
any one time. Simultaneous access is not possible, such as in the case of subscription databases. If a customer has an e-book checked out, no one else can access it until it is checked back in. Titles in high demand would be candidates for multiple copy purchases. As previously mentioned, even if interest in a particular title trails off, librarians would find no reason to delete copies unless they were able to resell or send the copy back to the vendor if purchased on a lease program. Otherwise, libraries should retain all titles unless space is an issue, which, in cases where the vendor hosts the collection, it is not.

The copyright date of a book is certainly relevant, and most libraries already maintain weeding levels for classes of works with a specific age for weeding, such as medical and legal titles. Libraries should review these lists and determine if they remain applicable to e-book format. The number of uses per title may or may not be relevant on its own. Other factors would have to present themselves to determine the title's relevancy in the collection. Among all of the criteria used to determine a title's disposition, format is extremely important. Librarians should ask themselves if the format impedes or supports easy access to the material. Are library customers embracing this format and can they use it? Equally important is the vendor's ability to provide improvements in functionality and upgrades that continue to develop the format.

As librarians weed their e-book collection, they determine a title's disposition to retain or remove. In the future, libraries may also have the ability to resell or trade the title (depending on copyright and contract). If a title is going to be removed from the collection, then its MARC record should also be deleted from the catalog and any online booklists it appears in. It is not clear whether a well-weeded e-book collection will increase circulation as occurs in physical libraries. Further investigation of traditional weeding criteria and how it applies to online book collections will certainly assist librarians as the collection ages and the technology that delivers it evolves.

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Programming to Promote Local History
Remembering the Topeka Tornado of 1966

Elizabeth Staley

“Our home was completely gone. We moved into a trailer at the airport; it was a nice one, but it was so hot that summer. It took weeks to clean everything up. The state of Kansas workers, church friends, family friends, National Guard, Mennonites, and everyone were so good. The Salvation Army with their canteen of hot food, buckets, mops, brooms, and shovels they gave people. The Red Cross with all their assistance too—food allowances and clothing allowances. I never hear a chainsaw that it doesn’t remind me of the tornado. You heard them constantly for weeks, cutting down trees, and sawing the limbs up.” —excerpt from Linda’s story, sixteen years old in June 1966

The emotion and detail in Linda’s story convey the importance of including personal perspectives along with objective newspaper clippings in local history collections. While today’s current events will be archived in tomorrow’s vertical files, the demand for that information may not come for months or years. Twentieth-century local history collections can be made more relevant to the public by providing a forum in which to express and preserve individual memories and experiences.

Programming from Local History Collections

The “Remembering the Topeka Tornado of 1966” anniversary program developed out of the desire to promote and improve local history collections by involving the public. Our library’s Topeka Room archives provides access to local history and local author information, including books, newspaper clippings, and maps, although these collections are not highly developed or promoted. The popularity of older high school yearbooks located in the Topeka Room demonstrates the active public interest in locating oneself, relatives, or friends within the local history collection. How could the library invite members of the community to contribute to the local history collection?

We decided to focus on a specific event in Topeka’s history. From working with the public, librarians know that everyone loves to talk about the weather. In Topeka, the biggest weather story continues to be the F5 tornado that cut a six-block-wide path through the city in 1966, destroying homes, businesses, the campus of Washburn University, and affecting every resident’s life for years to come. Each spring during inclement weather, Topeka residents still chat about this disaster. The Topeka Room built a file documenting the historic tornado, but only a few personal memories were recorded and preserved, although hundreds of people are still living in Topeka who experienced that tornado firsthand.

Realizing that merely offering to collect these stories was not enough, the organizers expanded the idea to include a public forum where people could share their memories. Our idea came from a class project at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois that developed a prototype online community museum to encourage people to contribute a digital photo of their most important possession along with a narrative interview. The class, “Representing and Organizing Information,” demonstrated that people’s individual stories are important components of a community history collection. The detailed personal stories enriched the objects’ meaning and encouraged understanding and appreciation among a diverse community. The online museum fostered a sense of wonder and connection as participants browsed for similarities and differences among selections and stories. By narrowing this concept to a single local event, the personal stories could show the variety of connected human experiences in the community.

A local journaling workshop inspired the use of memory booklets and journaling prompts to evoke personal recollections. The program goal became to involve and engage the community in the process of documenting, sharing, and listening to stories about the Topeka tornado of ’66. The library hoped this project would strengthen its role as a center of community information while also validating patrons’ personal experiences. Stories about 1966 tornado experiences were collected in paper booklets and through an online Web form. Submissions are preserved in the Topeka Room, where copies are displayed for researchers and patrons to read, learn from, and enjoy.

Using Newspaper, Radio, and Television News

The memory booklet and Web form contained six open-ended questions to prompt recollections about the tornado, as well as information about the program. Memory booklets could be picked up at the library or on bookmobiles. The Red Carpet Department, which delivers
library materials to older adults, took booklets to patrons in retirement communities and care facilities. The project received additional publicity from several appearances on local newscasts, with tornado footage and quotes from exemplary submissions. To further promote the program, the library arranged a local newspaper interview with former Topeka broadcaster Bill Kurtis. His famous words during the tornado—“For God’s sake, take cover”—saved many lives, launched his national broadcasting career, and solidified his celebrity status for many Topeka residents. The local newspaper article was picked up from the AP Wire by USA Today, which gave our library and the program brief national news coverage. Word of mouth was also important, and the publicity reached people around the state and country who submitted their stories via the Web form. The library achieved increased publicity to new audiences, particularly when the local weather forecasters promoted the program on air. The most effective media advertising was the local newspaper article, based on the number of participant responses immediately following its appearance.

Orchestrating the Anniversary Event

The thirty-seventh anniversary program attracted more than one hundred participants. As people gathered for the program, they browsed displays of photos, maps, original newspaper articles, and collected personal stories. During the first hour of the program, the audience listened intently to several audio interviews with television and radio news anchors and an emergency room nurse. The interviews had been recorded in 1996 by a local radio news personality, and solidified his connection to the community is a living part of our local history. The program successfully raised community awareness of the library’s local history collection and instilled a greater sense that each individual in the community is a living part of our local history.

The personal memories recorded in this booklet will be added to the permanent collection of the Topeka Room and will be accessible to all library patrons. To obtain additional booklets to record your tornado memories, or to find out more about the ‘66 tornado, contact the Topeka Room at 580-4510.

Ongoing Efforts to Build the Memory Collection

As a result of the program, the library’s Red Carpet Services created two “kits” for older adults and activity directors including larger-print copies of the collected memories, audio interviews on CD, photos, and blank memory booklets. Donations to the library’s local history collection and instilled a greater sense that each individual in the community is a living part of our local history.

The eight-page memory booklet announces the anniversary program while providing a place to record personal stories.

The June 8th tornado and he said he was too. I asked him where he was and he told me he was in the basement of Blaylock Drug with several friends! My jaw almost hit the floor. It is a small world! He then told me he knew everyone there except one stranger. I was that stranger.

In reaction to this story, a previously silent observer volunteered to share her story; she had also been in the basement of that same drugstore during the tornado. This fitting conclusion summarized the sense of community and common memory that talking about the ’66 tornado holds for many residents. The program successfully raised community awareness of the library’s local history collection.

Please insert additional pages by folding them inside this booklet and label additional pages with your first name and age in 1966.

The Topeka Room or the Library collects local history information about Topeka, including the events, history, experiences, and culture of the people of Shawnee County.

The personal memories recorded in this booklet will be added to the permanent collection of the Topeka Room and will be accessible to all library patrons. To obtain additional booklets to record your tornado memories, or to find out more about the ‘Topeka Tornado of ’66, contact the Topeka Room at 580-4510.

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Please insert additional pages by folding them inside this booklet and label additional pages with your first name and age in 1966.
and the effect on the community.

The program will be repeated in 2006 for the fortieth anniversary. The library will continue building the local history collection to prepare a more extensive recognition and exploration for the community. The project to collect tornado stories for the local history collection is ongoing. The majority of responses were returned via the Web form on the library’s Web site. Regardless of the participant’s location, the electronic format was advantageous for compilation, and handwritten submissions created difficulties in archiving and providing access to legible copies. Librarians placed all originals into an archival box and made copies for public use. In future projects, we will stress the Web form submission and provide booklets as an alternative. We will also develop guidelines for oral history interviews to encourage more community participation. In retrospect, video footage of the 2003 anniversary program would have been a valuable oral history contribution. The 2006 program will be recorded to preserve the shared history contribution. The 2006 program would have been a valuable oral history contribution. The 2006 program will be recorded to preserve the shared history memories.

Looking at Similar Community Projects

Not every community can rally around a tornado, but every community has shared memories about a certain place, an annual event, or a beloved community leader. We found that people who were not involved in the 1966 Topeka tornado were just as interested in reading people’s memories, because they recognized that this event was significant to their community’s history.

Across the country, other libraries are undertaking similar projects, recognizing the relevance of personal stories to their special collections. The Jefferson County (Colo.) Public Library recently collected fifty personal remembrances from staff and library users and published them in a book to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. Like “Remembering the Topeka Tornado of 1966,” this project generates interest in hearing other voices and honors those experiences and personal stories as part of the library’s history.

The Carnegie Museum of Art, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (Penn.), and the Department of History at the University of Pittsburgh are working together to add the missing personal stories and captions to recently acquired photographs by Teenie “One Shot” Harris. From the Depression through the Civil Rights era, Harris captured the urban African-American community with photographs “unsurpassed in the range of subjects they portray and noted for their ability to evoke the spirit of an era and to display the humanity of a people.”

* Documenting Our Past: The Teenie Harris Archive Project promotes accessibility to increase participation in this documentary project. The 3,600 images are available for viewing at locations throughout Philadelphia and on the museum’s Web site. The public is invited to meet with an oral historian, or record their memories at the Web site.

The Lawrence (Kan.) Public Library has joined a nationwide project to record the memories of America’s veterans. Librarian Pattie Johnson says she lacked the staffing time and budget to join the Library of Congress American Memory Project for Veterans Memories until she partnered with the Dole Institute of Politics, a local university, and high school history classes. The first round of oral history volunteers was trained to videotape and audiotape interviews to gather stories of veterans of World War II and of people living in or around Lawrence during the war years. This project is labor-intensive and requires a central organizer to coordinate and communicate among everyone involved. For those organizing similar projects, Johnson advises, “The persons who share their stories are eager to participate and will give names of others who have wonderful stories to share also. Be prepared to talk to more persons than first listed.”

Many options exist for the focus of a local history remembrance project, depending on the major events of the community. Creative and innovative programs are launching across the country.

Planning a Local History Remembrance Project in Your Community

Questions for Brainstorming

What are your patrons talking about?
What are the big twentieth-century events in your local history?
What other national or world events have affected individual lives in your community?

Possible Projects

Local industry—mining, farming, railroad, manufacturing
Local disaster—flood, fire, hurricane
Local sites—Cahokia Mounds, the Plaza, the Arch
Annual events—the Italian Fest, Spirit Fest
Depression-era memories, Dust Bowl
World War II letters
Civil Rights movement, Negro Baseball Leagues
Vietnam War, Gulf War
American Memory Project for Veterans Memories* September 11, 2001, tragedies

The Library

Discussion Questions for Planning

Do patrons’ individual stories have a place in the local history collection?
What benefits would this type of program have in the community?
What partnerships could be formed?
Who already has some information on this topic?
Who is the target audience for memory submissions?
Who is the target audience for the enjoyment of the personal stories?

Preparing relevant stories and pictures to this participation was not guaranteed. Students who shared their stories on the day of the program depended on the residents as needed. Ultimately the success could be made quickly and tasks delegated as needed. Decisions became a benefit overall, because I was surprised because I had not experienced this tornado firsthand, but this deficiency became a benefit overall, because I was clearly defined in my role of “appreciative listener.” In pre-event publicity, potential participants were reassured that their stories were interesting and unique, and that without their individual contribution the library’s local history collection would be incomplete. I learned so much from each person, not just about weather or local history, but about human nature, memories, and what really matters almost forty years later.

Sharing Some Final Thoughts

The “Remembering the Topeka Tornado of 1966” project has been my most rewarding library program. Having a central contact person for this program was advantageous because decisions could be made quickly and tasks delegated as needed. Ultimately the success of the program depended on the residents who shared their stories on the day of the event. While eagerly anticipated, this participation was not guaranteed. Preparing relevant stories and pictures to share along with the participants’ contributions created a more relaxed program that could be adjusted to compensate for the number of people willing to speak.

When organizing this project, I worried because I had not experienced this tornado firsthand, but this deficiency became a benefit overall, because I was clearly defined in my role of “appreciative listener.” In pre-event publicity, potential participants were reassured that their stories were interesting and unique, and that without their individual contribution the library’s local history collection would be incomplete. I learned so much from each person, not just about weather or local history, but about human nature, memories, and what really matters almost forty years later.

Public Librarians Win Cash for Telling Their Stories in Public Libraries!

The Public Library Association is pleased to announce the 2003 winners of its annual article contest. The contest awards cash prizes to the authors of the best feature articles by public librarians published in the previous year’s issues of Public Libraries. The first prize award of $500 goes to Solina Kasten Marquis, Youth Services Librarian at the Frisco Public (Tex.) Library, for her two-part article “Collections and Services for the Spanish Speaking,” which appeared in the March/April and May/June 2003 issues of Public Libraries. Second prize of $300 goes to Michael Sullivan, Director of the Weeks Public Library, Greenland, New Hampshire, for his article, “The Fragile Future of Public Libraries,” which was published in the September/October 2003 issue. The winners of the contest are selected by the members of the Public Libraries Advisory Committee. The prizes will be awarded at the 2004 ALA Annual Conference in Orlando.

Public librarians interested in being considered for the 2004 prizes should visit the PLA Web site at www.pla.org/publications/publibraries/editorialguide.html for submission guidelines, or e-mail publiclibraries@aol.com for more information.

References

1. Complete submissions from “Topeka Tornado of 1966 Remembered” are archived in the Topeka Room at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.
3. Complete submissions from “Topeka Tornado of 1966 Remembered” are archived in the Topeka Room at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.
Library Service Planning with GIS and Census Data

Denice Adkins and Denyse K. Sturges

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are popping up everywhere. The MapQuest directions you printed out for your journey, your new car with the OnStar navigational system, and your wristwatch with a Global Positioning System (GPS) chip all use GIS to orient you to the world around you. The GPS chip in your dashboard sends a signal saying that you are at a particular location. That information is combined with a road map containing latitudinal and longitudinal measurements, and as a result, your car can tell you which streets to take to reach your destination.

GIS software works by combining maps with “geocoded” information. The process of geocoding information links that information with a particular place on a digitized map. The map already contains the “picture” of the information; you can see where the streets are and estimate your journey’s length. The information added to that map brings more meaning to it. For instance, information can be added that gives street names, tells you which streets are one-way, where traffic jams are likely to occur, and which intersections have high accident rates. With this added information, the map is more useful to the driver. An added benefit to using a GIS system is that information can be updated relatively quickly. If an influx of winter visitors changes traffic flow in a city, that information can be added to the map for the winter months, or taken away for the summer. Although street maps and driving directions may have some applicability to public librarians who need to travel from one branch to another, or bookmobile drivers faced with new routes, the real benefit of using GIS in public libraries is in its ability to present information about the library’s service community.

In this article, we review how Census 2000 information and GIS software can be used to plan library services. We’ll look at real data from two branches in the Phoenix (Ariz.) Public Library system: the Ocotillo Branch in the less-developed southwestern part of the city; and the Yucca Branch in the heart of the city. Data from these two branches will be used to show how GIS software can connect the library service mission to each branch’s unique demographic situation.

How Will GIS Software Improve Public Library Service?

GIS software allows you to visually represent and manipulate information about your service population. Geographically bounded data, such as census demographics, can be connected to other geographically bound data. The map image can be quickly changed to present different perspectives on your information—one image could represent the number of children in your service area, while another portrays the locations of laundromats and grocery stores. Pictures and maps communicate more than tables and text, making presentations to the library board of trustees or city commissioners more memorable and meaningful.

GIS software has the potential to improve public library service by increasing libraries’ awareness of the communities surrounding them. Libraries need to know who their communities really are, beyond just the small percentage who show up in the library on a regular basis. This tool allows libraries to see who lives and works in their neighborhood, what kinds of materials they need, where the library should increase outreach, and which areas remain unserved.

The Method

In addition to the decennial census, the United States Census Bureau also makes geographical information available. An easy way to learn more about your patron base is to connect that physical and demographic information to a map of your service area. The first step is to create that map of your service area. Tiger Files created by the U.S. Census Bureau allow librarians to download county road maps to their GIS program. Library locations are then geocoded into these road maps by searching for the library’s address or nearest cross-streets. Then the library service area can be defined, either by creating an organic shape around the library, like a circle surrounding the library point, or a more specific shape decided upon by the library. Some libraries even use census tracts to delineate their service areas. After the library’s location has been geocoded into the map, information about the library can be added to the map. Specifics about the library, including its name, size of the building, the number of staff, or the size of the collection can be added to the map at this point.

Information about the library is then combined with Census 2000 demographic information by downloading census data files and importing the data into your GIS program. You can then identify the census blocks, block groups, and tracts that intersect your library’s service area, and pull results from that specific area. A census block is the smallest unit for which aggregate census data is collected. The physical size of a census block can be very small, in densely populated areas, or very large, in sparsely populated areas. Tracts are designed to be relatively permanent comparison areas and are generally bounded by permanent visible features or state and county boundaries. Census 2000 demographic files are available by county and are layered over the road map and library service areas already extant in the GIS.
program. Then the program takes demographic data from the area where the demographic layer intersects with the library service area layer. The resulting demographics from the library service area are displayed in tabular format when the user clicks on the library service area.

The Census Bureau has released four Summary Files from Census 2000 data. Summary File 1 (SF1) was collected from the Census 2000 short form and contains total 2000 population, race, age, number of households, number of families, and number of housing units per census block. SF2 is grouped per census tract and contains more detailed data on United States households, including the ages and relationships between householders. Detailed tables break down housing statistics by race, ethnic origin, and to a limited extent, tribal affiliation. SF3 data is collected from the Census 2000 long form, sent to one out of six households, and linked to Census block groups. SF4 information is also taken from the long form, but presented by census tract. SF3 and SF4 describe ancestry, language use, education levels, income, occupation, socioeconomic class, and data about household facilities.

For this demonstration article, data were taken from SF1 and SF3 files.

### Connecting Library Service Areas to Demographic Information

Public libraries exist to serve the public, and to do this, they need to know who their public is and what their public wants. In 1949, Bernard Berelson maintained that public libraries were used by people living relatively close to the public library. Christine M. Koontz reviewed research which supports branch proximity as a factor in patron usage. However, she points out that obstacles such as raised highways or railroad tracks may serve as barriers to library use in the service area. Additionally, some libraries create artificially bounded service areas for their branches in order to maintain an equitable distribution of libraries per capita. Regardless of the shape or area chosen as a library’s service area, it remains important to know who you’re going to be serving and how to reach them.

Even in the same city, two branches can have dramatically different service populations. In our example, the Ocotillo and Yucca branches are only nine miles apart as the crow flies. However, the service population is fundamentally different between these two locations. Materials and services appropriate for one branch may not be appropriate to meet the needs of the population at the other branch. The images produced by our GIS package have helped to make this difference visible.

### Connecting Demographics to Collection Development

Once we have linked the demographic data with the maps of our service areas, we have a better idea of who our potential patrons are (see figure 1). Knowing this gives us an advantage when we try to develop the collection. The Ocotillo Branch, for example, has a greater percentage of children in its service area than does the Yucca Branch, 37 percent compared to 27 percent (see figure 2). Collection development funds for Ocotillo Branch might be adjusted to allow Ocotillo Branch to purchase more children’s and school-related books.

By contrast, the Yucca Branch has a greater percentage of older adults and senior citizens than the Ocotillo Branch, 11 percent compared to 7 percent (see figure 3). The Yucca Branch has an older population, and 66 percent of those who worked outside the home traveled alone in their own vehicles to their workplace. This branch might want to expend more on its large print and audio-book collection for its older patron population.

We can also see that, while the Ocotillo and Yucca branches both have significant Hispanic populations in their service area, more than 75 percent of Ocotillo’s patronage is Hispanic (see figure 4). More than half of the Ocotillo Branch population use Spanish in their homes. This suggests that Ocotillo Branch patrons might need more materials in Spanish and more English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) materials (see figure 5).

Looking at educational attainment reveals that less than 6 percent of the service population has completed bachelor’s degree programs, and only 48 percent of the population has completed high school. Materials geared toward lower reading levels might be appropriate for this community, with the understanding that patrons may request materials through system transfers at any time. By contrast, 78 percent of Yucca Branch patrons have graduated from high school and another 22 percent have completed bachelor’s degree programs. The collection development plan for this library could safely include materials written for an academic audience (see figures 6 and 7).

Further investigation of our census data shows that almost 30 percent of Yucca Branch residents have managerial and professional occupations, compared to 14 percent of Ocotillo Branch residents. Sales and office occupations were held by 28 percent of Yucca Branch and 25 percent of Ocotillo Branch residents.
Ocotillo Branch residents were represented in manual trades to a greater degree than Yucca Branch residents: 22 percent held positions in the production, transportation, and materials-moving occupations, 17 percent held positions in construction-related occupations, and 10 percent in groundskeeping and maintenance occupations. Yucca Branch percentages for these occupations were 12 percent, 13 percent, and 5 percent respectively. The occupational differences here suggest different work-related information needs, as well as different leisure-time pursuits, and perhaps even different leisure-time schedules. Construction workers might be employed seasonally and have more free time in the winter, compared to managers who work year-round.

Connecting Demographics to Circulation Data

Once you've developed a collection, you might be interested to know which materials are most popular at the branches, and where your collection goes after it is checked out. Researchers at Indiana University tracked the circulation of types of materials in the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library. In 1995, when this study was conducted, the researchers had to decide which census tracts most closely corresponded to branch service populations. Only after that data had been sifted through could database software connect it to circulation data. Statistics would have had to be manually added to the map of libraries and census tracts. When GIS technology became available in 1997, one of the researchers was later able to map patron usage for a particular branch, connect branch usage to census tract demographics, and correlate videotape circulation with income level. These studies used 1990 census data, which was available only at the census tract level. Technological advances now make it possible for the Census Bureau to release information at the finer block-group or block level. To replicate this example today, library circulation data could be imported into a GIS system and linked with community demographic data with relative ease.

An Australian geographer took this a step further and mapped patron data to determine whether certain areas of a town were being served by the library. Jones produced a map of active and inactive library users and their proximity to the library. A sample of daily circulation records could be mapped in this same fashion, connecting relevant data about the item circulated to a patron address and a branch indicator. In this
way, we could estimate how many Yucca Branch residents travel to use the Ocotillo Branch facilities, or whether Ocotillo Branch patrons are making heavy use of the Economics and Finance books from the Yucca Branch. This circulation tracking mechanism would allow libraries to see exactly what types of books are popular in which neighborhoods, allowing them to develop more responsive collections. The information gathered could also help distinguish between the designated and actual library service area. As with any project in which identifying information is used, however, it is vitally important to guarantee patron confidentiality.

Connecting Demographics to Staffing

Previous research suggests that children make frequent use of the library, and adults with children are more likely to use the library than adults without. As the Ocotillo Branch has a large percentage of children in its service area, the library director might want to allocate extra after-school staff to that branch. The Yucca Branch is located in close proximity to several major retail centers. This branch may wish to keep “retail” hours, encouraging families to stop at the library on the way to or from the shopping center. The programming staff might be encouraged to offer family-oriented programs on weekend afternoons, as well as age-specific programs on weekday mornings.

Another element of staffing to be considered: the Ocotillo Branch has a very high percentage of Hispanic people in its service area, many of whom use Spanish as their home language. When a new staff position comes up, the library might be able to make Spanish fluency a priority. This extra consideration would ensure better communication between patrons and their library, and this extra staff member would be in a better position to implement bilingual programming and Spanish-language collection development than an English-monolingual staff would.

The library system can also make staffing decisions based on library usage, by adding a “library visits per capita” indicator to branch data. Increased staff might be allocated to branches with higher patron counts. Nevertheless, previous studies by Christine M. Koontz and Dean K. Jue suggest that library usage cannot always be equated with circulation rates.

Koontz and Jue studied “majority-minority” libraries, libraries for which the majority of the service population were racial or ethnic minorities. They found that although circulation rates for majority-minority branches were lower than those of other branches, program attendance and building use were equal to or higher than rates for those other branches. People differ in their reasons for using the libraries, and libraries might want to use the most responsive usage indicators for their branches to reflect that difference in library use.

Connecting Demographics to Outreach

Not only can GIS data tell you which resources are popular and where, you can also use this data to provide customized outreach efforts to particular neighborhoods. If you have a general idea of who your service population is, it’s also useful to know how to reach them—particularly if they don’t use the library. Ocotillo Branch demographics reveal a population that is very young and primarily Hispanic. Yucca Branch demographics suggest an older middle-class community. Even knowing this little information gives you a better idea of where to focus your outreach efforts. However, you can also add another layer to your GIS map, a layer that represents community agencies and gathering places. This layer can include schools, recreation areas, senior centers, and other gathering places, suggesting where your outreach efforts should be focused.

The Yucca Branch example demonstrates a variety of outreach possibilities. Programs could be conducted at the neighboring shopping center or park. The opportunity exists for storytime visits to elementary schools and library instruction sessions at middle and high schools. School statistics include descriptive data such as the total number of teachers, total number of students, students receiving free or reduced lunch, racial and ethnic data on students, or student-teacher ratios. Upon learning that there are 603 kindergarten students, 872 first graders, and 677 second graders attending school in their service area, Yucca Branch children’s librarians might decide to do a story-telling and library card sign-up blitz during the school year. Young adult librarians can use ethnicity data to determine whether to translate Teen Read Week flyers into Spanish for a particular school. The more you know about a population, the easier it will be to design services to meet its needs.

Connecting Demographics to Branch Location and Service Hours

If your city is fortunate enough to build a new branch library, your GIS-based demographic data will help determine the best location to build that new library. Mapping new library locations can be reduced to pinpointing a prospective location for the new branch and gathering demographic data for the surrounding area. You can move your hypothetical new branch to different locations on the map, to see which location will reach the greatest number of people. In addition, knowing the languages spoken by the people in the library service area could help the library develop appropriate signage and promotional advertising for your new branch.

In addition to information on race, ethnicity, and home language, SF3 includes information about people with disabilities and types of disabilities. When constructing a new branch or remodeling an old one, this information can be shared with architects and contractors to help them understand the importance of accessible design. The population in the Ocotillo Branch service area had 1,876 sensory disabilities (impaired or disrupted sensory perception). More than 4,000 physical disabilities were tallied for this population, as were 2,532 mental disabilities. As the population ages, the number of people with mild and serious disabilities will increase. If the library is to serve the entire community, it will be necessary to accommodate people across all ranges of ability.

Another statistic available via SF3 is workers’ travel time from home to workplace, and the time they leave to arrive at their workplace. In the Yucca Branch service area, 57 percent of workers leave for work between 5 A.M. and 8 A.M. More than 80 percent of all Yucca Branch workers have a travel time of less than thirty-five minutes. Knowing this, we can estimate the best library service hours for the majority of working Yucca Branch patrons. If we assume one hour of total travel time, and nine hours of work time, we can also assume that working Yucca Branch patrons would
not be able to use the library any earlier than 3 p.m. Of course, planning for works excludes those who do not work and those who are looking for work. Another section of SF3 tells us that in 4 percent of Yucca Branch families, someone is unemployed and looking for work. Another 43 percent of families contain someone who is unemployed and not looking for work, such as retirees and stay-at-home parents. These people are presumably able to use the library at any time, but may prefer to visit before the afternoon crowds.

Working with GIS Software

At the present time, there are several options for libraries wishing to use GIS. The first option is to do it yourself. Your library may already have a database or systems specialist working with local data, or someone who wants to experiment with new technology. GIS software is available from many vendors, and public libraries may qualify for discounted pricing. The package used for this example was ArcView 3.1, created by ESRI, Inc. ESRI (www.esri.com) is probably the best-known GIS software provider, especially for the general desktop user. The software has a fairly steep learning curve, but university and vendor-sponsored classes are available to reduce that curve. Other GIS vendors and software can be located through the GIS Monitor Web site (www.gismonitor.com).

At least two kinds of data should be included in a library’s GIS package: library-specific data and demographic data. The data a library chooses to include in its GIS system will vary, depending upon the problems the library is trying to solve. However, some of that data will be readily available through the library’s system, including circulation rate, collection size, collection age, numbers and types of materials checked out, and patrons’ registered addresses or birth dates. Number of staff, number of programs conducted, in-library use of materials, number of reference transactions, and building size are all factors that may affect library use by a community. This information may need to be manually collected and entered.

Demographic data can be downloaded for free from the Census Bureau (www.census.gov/census_2000/states); however, this data comes as flat ASCII files and must be converted into a form that ArcView can use. Fortunately, the Census Bureau also provides instructions and templates for some popular software packages to simplify the file conversion. Alternatively, demographic and other data can be purchased. Both ESRI and Proximity (http://proximityone.com) sell demographic data and offer instructions on how to use it. Combined with library-related information, community demographics help the library understand its services in light of its community. It gives a visual referent, which indicates where the library specifically needs to target its efforts. If, for instance, our Yucca Branch were to hold English as a Second Language classes, we would know that advertising those classes in the northeast quadrant of their service area would bring little return compared to advertising in the southwest quadrant.

For those who have reservations about using Census 2000 data as the decade wears on, the Census Bureau will be updating its population and housing demographics throughout the decade, via the American Community Survey.13 The American Community Survey is an annual survey of a sample of American households, based on information normally gathered in the census long form. While this sample data will not be as comprehensive as the population demographics available from the Census Bureau’s Summary File 1, it will provide an overall picture of community change.

GIS software is relatively inexpensive, and the data can be had for free. However, the library may be duplicating efforts already underway in the municipal planning department, and it may be possible to piggyback onto its service. Your library may be the only one in the community asking the planning department for help, but it is not the only agency in the community that needs information. Talk with other agencies to find out what information they need and what background work you might do to help the planning department meet both agencies’ needs. Community data might not be immediately available in the format needed, so libraries should be prepared to work with the planning department and spell out their needs. A disadvantage to contracting through another governmental agency is the lack of control over the data. City planners may not want to spend time importing and making available library-related data. An additional concern comes in when sharing sensitive data like patron addresses; will the municipal planning department treat that information as the library would wish? However, a relationship between the library and the planning department could prove useful in the long term as communities and their data change.

Some public libraries have turned to another alternative: a product called LibraryDecision (www.librarydecision.com), offered by CIVIC Technologies. Billed as American Libraries as a “product to watch,” LibraryDecision allows libraries to map their service areas and library measures to census information, then access those results via a Web browser.14 “We wanted to provide an out-of-the-box solution for libraries that would give immediate results for decision making,” said CIVIC Technologies president Marc Futterman. Using a pre-formatted interface, libraries provide data on library usage, facilities, holdings, and operations. LibraryDecision adds this to census and geographic data and produces a map showing library locations, demographic data, and library indicators. Libraries can access this information over the Web, so that library staff and patrons can determine how well their community is being served. While libraries are limited in the type of data that can be included in the LibraryDecision package, they have the advantage of working with a library-oriented company. An ESRI press release names several public libraries already using this service.15 Libraries will also realize a considerable time savings using LibraryDecision over implementing their own GIS system. CybraryN, which produces public access computer security products, also has a GIS package available called CybraryView (www.cybraryn.com/products/Mapping/cybraryview.asp). Libraries wishing to use this product must also use CybraryN.

You can get a taste of your library’s demographic situation without purchasing software or downloading data by using the Public Library Geographic Database (PLGDB), developed at the University of South Florida.16 This GIS map of public libraries in the United States allows librarians to look at communities surrounding their library buildings and, as demographics are included, will allow libraries to plan branch locations. Including Federal State Cooperative System public library data expands the utility of this service by allowing libraries to compare themselves to other libraries in other states. A project on this nationwide scale may make it difficult for individual libraries to include the data points that are mean-
ingful to them, if those data are not meaningful to the thousands of other libraries in the United States. However, the PLGDB includes important national data, such as political and school district boundaries, and represents a huge step toward mapping public libraries and their communities. A similar project is available for libraries in the state of Illinois. The Illinois Public Library GIS Project (http://gis.iit.edu/ Web site/plgis/ viewer.htm) provides a GIS map of library service areas, school districts, and census demographics for the state of Illinois. This project is a joint product of the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Another way to access demographic information comes from the American FactFinder (AFF), which accesses tract-level data from the census Summary Files. These files are freely accessible at http://factfinder.census.gov. By entering a library street address, the library can retrieve information about the census tract, block group, and block in which the library is located. Most urban libraries serve multiple blocks and block groups, making the tract the most relevant portion of data accessible from AFF. Using AFF, a basic map of the census tract area can be produced, showing the boundaries of the tract and the area served. Although library service areas may not directly correspond with census tracts, AFF is a valuable source of demographic information for your community.

What Else Can Be Done?

GIS systems provide an alternate way for public libraries to use census data and present it to their communities. Collecting demographics over time could be used to document the rate of community change; further, this information might be valuable to municipal historians as well as librarians. A library could keep track of people using Internet services to determine how far the library has reached through its provision of free Internet services.

However, once a GIS system is in place, its utility can be extended beyond just keeping track of community demographics. A librarian might map her outreach contacts and then gather the addresses of patrons attending a library program to determine which contacts were fruitful and where she needs to increase her outreach efforts. She might document classroom visits by school, using that information to predict children’s demand for services. GIS systems can be used for planning services in the building as well as in the community. If she wished to keep track of in-house use of materials, a librarian might use a digital map of the library to determine where people linger, and at which times of the day. The periodicals section may get more morning use, but the computers more afternoon use. A building supervisor concerned about traffic flow in the library could use that digital map to simulate library disaster response in varying situations to determine the quickest way to control a dangerous situation.

Conclusion

GIS systems combine digital images with information. In 2000, GraceAnne A. DeCandido wrote that GIS systems “allow problem solving to happen in a new and different way, by the visual inclusion of spatial data in the analysis of spatial problems.”17 GIS provides libraries with a visual image of their service area and allows them to combine that with community-specific information. Libraries can look to GIS maps to see which neighborhoods are well served by the library and which have not been reached, where materials circulate, and where the population congregates.

A librarian’s job is to be informed: to know what kind of service he or she wants to provide and how he or she will use information generated to help provide that service. Libraries may generate the same types of basic statistics, but each will have different support personnel, infrastructures, funding, and communities. The better a library knows itself and its community, the better it will be able to provide meaningful services to that community. Although GIS systems require an investment of time and money, the information they generate help create a more responsive public library.

References

tologists write, illustrate, publish, sell, review, select, and buy children’s books. These grown-ups even decide which children’s books receive awards—but what do the children themselves say? Young people finally get the chance to voice their opinions through the young readers’ choice book award programs that operate in nearly every state in the Union. In these programs, children and young adults within a state vote each year for their favorite books. The winning author or book receives a prize usually presented at the annual conference of a state library or reading association. Here, twenty states’ awards are compared and five states’ awards are described in more depth, as are methods of evaluating the effect of these reading incentive programs on their participants.

Broad Comparison of Programs

Child-Choice award programs began in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s and grew rapidly in the 1980s, yet they have never been surveyed. The programs of these twenty states, distributed among the continental geographic regions, were surveyed, primarily via their Web sites: Connecticut, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Ohio; Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska; Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, and South Carolina; Arizona, Colorado, Texas, and Utah; and California and Washington.1

Sponsorship

Nearly all state programs compared here are sponsored by educational or library organizations, more than half are run by a state library association, as in Arizona. School library media specialists’ groups, as in Pennsylvania, and library or education departments of a university, as in Kansas, Georgia, South Carolina, and Kentucky, also figure prominently. Unusual sponsors in this survey include the Utah Children’s Literature Association, the Vermont Center for the Book, and the Vermont PTA. Four programs have two sponsors; some, like California, Ohio, and Illinois, have four or five backers. Arkansas’s Diamond Primary Reading Book Award takes the grand prize, for it is sponsored by the Arkansas Elementary School Council and twenty-five other organizations.2

Purpose of the Programs

One basic purpose of these programs is to foster literacy—to get children to read books. As expressed by Colorado: it is “to encourage children’s active involvement with books and reading.”3 From this common ground differences emerge, usually in the debate over quality versus popularity. Some programs promote distinctly good literature, while other programs “promote reading for enjoyment.”4 Most programs combine these two goals in one statement such as, “to foster a love of reading in the children of Louisiana, and to give them the opportunity to participate in the selection of books worthy of receiving an award for literary excellence.”5 Many declare that their awards exist to honor outstanding authors and illustrators. Others promote dialogue between students, teachers, and parents (Iowa) and “to stimulate and encourage cooperation among administrators, public and school librarians and teachers in broadening the reading programs at all levels” (Arizona).6

Student Participation

In her groundbreaking 1981 survey, librarian Helen Jordan found that “there is more variance in age, or grade, categories than in any other aspect of the children’s book awards.”7 For her dissertation research, Barbara Greer reviewed the literature on these programs in 1992, she found that the majority of them “were aimed at the intermediate level—fourth through eighth grades. Some states had a primary level . . . and some had a high school division. Several states had dropped their third grade due to lack of interest.”8 The current survey of twenty programs, conducted a decade after Greer’s, reveals that, of the total of fifty-three separate awards or award divisions, only four use the original designation of grades four through eight. Of the remaining forty-nine awards or divisions, twelve are for primary grades, eighteen for upper elementary, nine for middle school/junior high, four for combined middle school and high school, four for high school only, and two for awards for grades K–nine or all ages. This sample suggests that there are the most programs for the upper elementary grades and the least for high school grades.

Children across the country continue to participate and vote in increasing numbers. For example, 220,364 children (grades three through six) representing 1,825 schools in Texas voted in its 2003 election.9 In Pennsylvania, 6,074 children voted in the first election of 1992; in 2002, children voting in all divisions numbered 31,197, a whopping 513 percent jump in the last decade.10 Most programs surveyed showed steady, sometimes dramatic, growth.

Critical Processes: Initial Input, Committee Decisions, and Voting

To what degree do children, not adults, actually choose the nominated titles?
This is the crux of the debate about child-choice book awards. The large majority of these programs welcome recommendations for nominations from students as well as teachers, librarians, and media specialists; some take electronic submissions of titles directly from students on their Web sites. On one end of the spectrum are the totally child-centered programs with ballots entirely chosen by children, as Colorado’s YA award’s online brochure proclaimed: “The presentation of the list does not constitute endorsement by any adult.” Indeed, Ohio children nominate the titles for their award one year, and the following year, they vote upon their nominations. In the middle of the spectrum are those programs that simply do not state whether children’s recommendations are considered (Connecticut, Iowa, Vermont) and those declaring that any interested person in the state can suggest titles (Kansas and Louisiana). On the adult-centered side is Kentucky, in which “any adult may nominate a book for the KBA Master List.” Thereby appearing to exclude children from this process.

Recommended titles are invariably sent to a committee for further winnowing to decide which ones make it to the “master list,” a.k.a. the ballot. Usually these committees are made up of adults only. These committees are composed of librarians and teachers who self-select, or are appointed by sponsoring organizations. In only a few states (Connecticut, Kansas, South Carolina) do any students sit on the committees. Most committees have elaborate schedules and criteria for selecting the master list titles. Only two committees in this survey—Colorado’s Children’s and Washington’s Picture Book awards—simply tabulate student nominations and compile a list of the highest vote getters. Master List titles thereby appear as ballots, contain from three to twenty-five titles each, depending on their readership age range, category, and genre.

In all statewide programs, the children themselves vote for their favorites on the ballots provided by their schools or public libraries. Often a child may cast a ballot at both institutions. Some programs allow children and their teachers or librarians to enter individual votes or tallies directly through the Web. In a few states participating libraries must stock a certain percentage of the ballot titles; Colorado requires this “to assure availability and scope.” To be eligible to vote, children usually must be within the grade range of the category and must have read or have had read to them some portion of the ballot titles for their division, usually one-fifth to one-half the titles of long lists or divisions with wide age spans. Voting is most often done annually in the spring, with awards announced in April or May.

**Master List Selection Criteria**

Most award selection committees require that the title under consideration be in print and published or copyrighted within a three- to five-year period before the year in which the master list is selected or the award is presented. In addition, these programs insist that a title can be chosen only if its author and, in the case of picture books, illustrator are alive and residing in the United States (except for the programs of Louisiana and Utah). Sometimes United States citizenship is required, and sometimes the geographical area for author residence includes Canada and Mexico. Each program has its own peculiar rules regarding the ineligibility of previous award winners. Approximately half the states limit their ballots to works of fiction only, while another quarter also admit nonfiction and poetry, and the remainder strive to select a range of all genres. Of the eight states that specifically address Newbery and Caldecott books, Arkansas and Kentucky allow Newbery or Caldecott winners on their ballots, while the remaining six do not. Of these six, Iowa, Nebraska, and South Carolina do not allow the medal winners, but will consider the honor books. This leads some critics to carp that the crème de la crème is being ignored or purposely avoided by state programs. Even though Betsy Byars, S. E. Hinton, E. L. Konigsburg, Beverly Cleary, and Mildred Taylor have won state awards, Virginia Hamilton, who received a significant number of the major children’s book awards in this country, did not receive a state child-choice prize. However, almost all programs require that their ballot titles be well written and have literary qualities. Florida, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania are particularly vehement that the titles be of recognized literary merit, and three other programs require titles to be favorably reviewed by professional journals.

**Award Ceremony**

Most states present their awards at a final ceremony, although some newer programs and some for teens appear to be dispensing with this ritual. Winning authors are invited to accept awards at one of the sponsoring organizations’ annual conferences. Small groups of children from participating schools attend and meet the authors, sometimes to see one of their classmates present the award. The awards themselves range from certificates, bronze and silver medallions, and plaques to stained glass windows (Connecticut), etched bookends (Florida), engraved school bells (Iowa), hand-painted scrolls by local artists (Vermont), and pewter plates and goblets (Washington).

**Analysis of Five Programs**

The dynamics of child-choice awards in California, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania are described below in more detail. These five states were selected because their programs are well documented. These five reflect the variety in program design and administration that can be found in all fifty states and, as such, are fairly typical, with one exception: Kansas is unique in that it was the first state to offer such a program to its residents.

**Kansas**

The first winner in 1953 of the William Allen White (WAW) Award was Elizabeth Yates for *Amos Fortune, Free Man.* This program has a mission: “to introduce children to a variety of quality books, to celebrate reading, and to honor imaginative authors.” Its original grade-four-through-eight category has split into two divisions: grades three through five and six through eight. The award selection committee is made up of representatives from fourteen educational organizations; the recent inclusion of several students on the committee marks a move away from its earlier adult-centered approach. The simplicity of the award program and its involvement of educators on the selection committee have been big factors in its success, according to Barbara Herrin in her dissertation on the topic. A concerted effort is made to make WAW nominees available in Braille, large type, and on cassette, and to facilitate the voting of special education students. In contrast to some programs with minimal pomp and circumstance, Kansas includes a parade of students at its awards ban-
quet. Herrin noted that “stories of realistic fiction are most often chosen as winners of the award, with animal stories—both fanciful and realistic—well-established favorites.”21 Four CYRM divisions are grade leveled, each with master lists of three to five titles. Only Utah and Washington can compare in structural complexity. CYRM was first awarded in 1975 to Thomas Rockwell's *How to Eat Fried Worms*. The 2003 CYRM winners in the four divisions were *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato* by Kate DiCamillo, *Touching Spirit Bear* by Mikaelsen (Middle School/Jr. High); and *Define “Normal.”* Peters (Young Adult). The CYRM Picture Book for Older Readers Award is for all ages, having been first awarded in 2002 to Paul Fleischman for *Weslandia*.22 The *Babe and I* by Adler won this award in 2003. Young readers submit their recommendations through their teachers and librarians to the CYRM Committee, consisting of thirteen adults chosen from its four sponsoring organizations. This amalgamated committee works with the state’s huge demographic spread to produce a balanced list with appeal to children and with criteria that attempt to eliminate bias and promote recreational reading.23 To those not enmeshed in the committee work, the whole process may appear simple: “the books are nominated by librarians, but voted on by students in schools where the books are read as part of class projects.”24

**Colorado**

Dr. Anne K. Phillips, author, editor, and specialist in American children’s and adolescents’ literature at Kansas State University, conducted a survey of readers’ choice programs and presented her findings at the 1997 Modern Language Association annual meeting. In that paper, Phillips lauded Colorado’s Children’s Book Award (CCBA) program for focusing on the readers—not the reading mate-

**California**

The California Young Reader Medal (CYRM) stands out for its many award divisions and for its candid purpose: to “introduce young people to the enjoyment of reading purely for pleasure.”21 Four CYRM divisions are grade leveled, each with master lists of three to five titles. Only Utah and Washington can compare in structural complexity. CYRM was first awarded in 1975 to Thomas Rockwell's *How to Eat Fried Worms*. The 2003 CYRM winners in the four divisions were *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato* by Kate DiCamillo, *Bear* by Adler won this award in 2003.

**Nebraska**

In an earlier study of Nebraska’s program, Storey found that “quality and popularity were both expected influences and desired outcomes of the program from the start [in 1981]. It was hoped that children would become engaged in recreational reading, critical reading, and literary analysis.”28 Nebraska Library Association, the sponsor, defines the Golden Sower as “a literary award program designed to develop an appreciation among Nebraska’s youth for excellence in writing and beauty in illustrations.” Since at least the mid-1990s, schools and libraries have been urged to “involve children in the nomination process as much as possible.”29 Like most selection committees, Nebraska’s is composed of librarians, media specialists, and teachers who evaluate the nominations and come up with three master lists of ten titles each. One of its selection criteria is that the nominees must “exhibit literary and/or artistic merit,” and it precludes Newbery and Caldecott winners (but not Honor books) from nomination.31 Nebraska media specialists said that the Golden Sowers “are enjoyed more [than Caldecott winners] . . . have more appeal to children in grades K–3 . . . are selected by children . . . [and] are read while Caldecott books sit on the shelf.”32
Nevertheless, some critics find that these kinds of selection criteria amount to censorship, impinging upon the intellectual freedom of the young participants.33

Pennsylvania
The history of the Pennsylvania Young Reader’s Choice Award program reflects the growth patterns of many state awards in the 1990s. It began in 1991 as Jean Bellavance’s master’s project, when 6,074 children voted in two categories, grades three through five and six through eight.34 In 1995, the award for grades K–three was established, sending the total number of participants soaring to 21,821. In 2002, that total reached 31,197: K–three was the largest group, with 19,356 voters, and grades six through eight was the smallest group.35 Although a high school category has not yet been established, a reading list for teens is included in the award brochure. Anne Phillips noted that this program “demonstrates the committee’s conviction that all child-readers need support. . . . And it lays the groundwork for actually establishing a program . . . for those older readers.”36 Nominations from students are accepted, and a committee of librarians selects for the ballot fiction or nonfiction books that are “of recognized literary quality” published within the previous five years by living North American authors.37 The winning titles of 2002-03 were Humpty Dumpty Eggsplodes, O’Malley (grades K–three); The Butterfly, Polacco (grades three through six); and Two Princesses of Bamarre, Levine (grades six through eight).

Measuring Program Value to Participants
Several studies have attempted to appraise the significance of award programs for their participants, both young and grown-up. These evaluative methods are sketched below; the lack of rigorous impact assessments in this area is noted.

Participating Children
Helen Jordan decided that “the most objective measure of value [of the statewide programs] to children was the number who voted,” presumably as an output measure of children’s interest and participation, so she analyzed fourteen state programs operating in 1978. Jordan found that, in most states, the number of students voting was 5 percent to 9 percent of the total number of students, with some states’ rates as high as 12 percent—“significant” and “impressive” figures if each voter read even only one book, and because the number of children participating is always more than those voting.39 The programs increase literacy through peer pressure; reluctant readers are spurred by classmates to check out nominated books. While waiting to borrow nominated titles, children read titles outside their usual purview “because of the built-in excuse that they are reading from ‘the list,’ or that they are trying to read all thirty titles.”40 Jordan concluded that “many thousands have read books who may not have without the stimulation and momentum of these programs.”41

In Dee Storey’s 1987 study, seventy-five school librarians were queried “to ascertain whether or not there was some value in Nebraska’s Golden Sower [G. S.] Reading/Award Program beyond hypothesized popularity.”42 Seventy-two percent
of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that “children have developed better reading habits due to the G. S. program.”43 The majority (66 percent) agreed that “children read literature more frequently due to the G. S. program,” that “children recognize certain authors to a higher degree due to the G. S. program” (85 percent), and that “children check out other books by nominated authors/illustrators due to the G. S. Program” (75 percent).44 Storey concluded the G. S. program is “seen as a positive force influencing reading habits and awareness of literature.”45

For her comparison of state award book programs, Barbara Greer analyzed 143 returned survey questionnaires from media specialists in forty states selected at random in Georgia, Ohio, Texas, California, and Vermont. Greer wanted to raise schools’ awareness of the “impact that state book award programs have on their collection and, therefore, on students’ reading choices.”46 Asked to choose between Newbery, Caldecott, and state award winners, “the majority (45.2 percent) [of school media specialists responding] thought that the state book award winners were the most frequently checked out award winner in their media center.”47 Greer claimed that “because the children [in state award programs] have been involved in the process of selecting the winners, these seem to be more accepted and well-known than adult chosen award winners.”48 No attempt was made to discover whether students’ embrace of the state award books had to do with their involvement in any reading incentive program, or with their experience in choosing winners for a particular statewide program.

Some studies present powerful positive anecdotal evidence, although it is generally untested. One media specialist described CYRM: “by experiencing quality literature and discussing it, students learn to evaluate, select and reject material. Pleasure reading increased significantly with the CYRM program.”49 George Hodowanec, director of the William Allen White Library and chair of the Award Executive Committee at the time Herrin conducted her study, said, “I think it [WAW] has had a significant impact on children themselves—their reading habits. Children tend to read books on the list more readily.”50 Crystal McNally, director of library media services for Wichita Public Schools and chair of the Book Selection Committee at the time of Herrin’s study, said that WAW program books “have helped us grow in appreciation of the various cultures, and that the voting experience helps children build citizenship skills.”51 Dee Storey, in 1990, obtained the opinions of fifty-five school media specialists in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Carolina, and Texas. The majority of them would buy a popular state award winner over a high-quality but low-readership Newbery winner because “the [child-choice] program gives children a sense of identity with other readers in the state [and] the program gives children a chance to voice their opinion and have it count.”52

Kansas team teachers Geitz and Logan discovered the effects on literacy of state award master lists for mainstreamed special education and regular students in the same classroom. “The use of these high-interest-level materials helped motivate the lower ability students to read while continuing to challenge the more advanced reader.”53 These two teachers asked eighty-one middle schoolers to read a minimum of four 1993 WAW nominees in a month, and were offered extra credit for reading more. All the students, including the reluctant readers, achieved this minimum requirement, and “43% of the students chose to read more than four books. . . . Many of the students who began reading ‘easy’ books quickly chose the more involved books because they were recommended by friends. . . . We feel the book project was an overwhelming success. Students of all ability levels read quality literature and, more importantly, enjoyed it!”54

Participating Adults

Many adults benefit from their involvement with these statewide award programs. Jordan found that participating teachers read more children’s books to themselves, and read them aloud to their classes more often, than nonparticipating teachers; parents discovered a new world of children’s literature as they read along with their offspring; and participating librarians were stimulated “to keep abreast of recommended current titles.”55 Authors and illustrators who received the awards reported feeling personal gratification and creative stimulation.56 Publishers feel the financial effects of authors’ participation, but estimates of the impact of nominated titles on sales range from none to “a small but healthy increase,” for in some states, poorly funded school libraries base their annual acquisitions on the master list.57

Assessing the Outcomes

The foregoing program evaluations have been largely informal and subjective. In contrast, an assessment of the impact of a library program on program recipients may be narrowly defined as a systematic, rigorous, empirical study of its measurable outcomes. According to Texas state librarian Peggy Rudd, outcomes are “benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities, including new knowledge, increased skills, changed attitudes or values, modified behavior, improved condition, or altered status.”58 Assessing impacts or outcomes, explained Beverly Sheppard, acting director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, “replaces the question, ‘What activities did we carry out?’ with the question ‘What changed as a result of our work?’”59 Most public and state libraries, and possibly large school systems, have the means to assess initial outcomes occurring during programs, and intermediate outcomes occurring up to a few months after the program ends.60 Nevertheless, a thorough literature review did not reveal any such intentional and rigorous measurable outcome assessment studies of the young participants in statewide child-choice book award programs. This is a pity, as outcome measurements done at the state library level could be applied at local library levels to obtain funding.61

Conclusion

Statewide young readers’ choice award programs have tremendous power to have an impact on children’s literacy, yet to date these positive influences have remained largely untested in a systematic, objective manner. School and public libraries, by cooperating through partnerships and dedicating the necessary staff and money to perform the research, could coordinate year-round studies correlating children’s reading skills with their participation in the award programs. It is an ideal laboratory setup that begs to be investigated. Children, teachers, and librarians would benefit in the short-term, and, in coming generations, a more literate American society could be born.
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Beyond the Newsletter
Concrete Guidelines and Innovative Ideas for Effective Promotion

Karen L. Wallace

Even the most fabulous collections, programs, and services can all languish underutilized and ill-attended without effective promotion. At times, even the most creative among us can become stymied and fall into a rut, relying on the same promotional techniques for all library offerings. Considering other public libraries’ successful promotions, along with their underlying marketing principles, can help infuse new life in stale routines. This article presents ten guidelines for effective promotion, illustrated by real library practices.

1. Prepare the Way

Before promoting something to the public, the library staff should first lay the necessary groundwork. At the most obvious level, this requires making sure that the collection, service, or program to be promoted is ready for use or sign up. For example, collection resources need to be ready to circulate, of appeal to the intended audience, and available in sufficient quantity that the promotion will not create demand that cannot be met in a reasonable period. Additional customer service supports must also be in place. Internal promotion can help ensure that all frontline staff know at least the basics about the collection, service, or program slated for external promotion so that patrons will receive ready, accurate answers when they begin inquiring about the campaign. Moreover, internal promotion can build a sense of excitement about the offering that staff will be able to communicate to patrons.

Ideally, internal promotion will complement a broader customer service program, well integrated into the fabric of library operations, as poor service can undermine even the best-planned promotion. Bookstore owner Palmer Cook nicely encapsulates this point: “Marketing money might as well be shredded if customer service isn’t up to snuff.” The same holds true in libraries. The positive correlation between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction also merits at least brief mention. Happy, empowered employees are much better equipped to provide outstanding service than disgruntled workers.

The following examples demonstrate how two libraries have prepared the way for library staff:

- At a spring all-staff meeting, the Public Library of Des Moines (Iowa) hosted a speaker who shared inspirational strategies and information about early childhood literacy. The staff then received information about the library’s upcoming summer reading club to help them serve as knowledgeable “ambassadors” for the program.
- The Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library’s mission statement professes a commitment “to providing exceptional service to all.” To ensure consistent, uniform customer service delivery, both internally and externally, the library created CLASS (Customers Leaving Appreciative, Satisfied, and Sold), a one-day training program that all staff attend. Employees’ performance evaluations include an assessment of how well they demonstrate the skills and behaviors learned at this program, reinforcing its importance.

2. Match the Method to the Market

One of the most fundamental promotional principles, this guideline presupposes that librarians have a particular target market, or specific subset of the service population, in mind for the message they are trying to communicate. Rather than using a standard laundry list of promotional methods, librarians consider the characteristics and needs of the intended audience when designing techniques to reach them. This applies to both the selection of promotional channels (Web site articles, newspaper advertisements, personal testimonial) and the way the message is crafted (wording, graphic design, etc.) For example:

- “Standard” promotional methods, like flyers, newspapers, and radio, didn’t reach or register with the teen mothers and fathers that the Woodson Regional Library of the Chicago Public Library sought to recruit for a parenting course. Ultimately, the library connected with its target audience by working with institutions that already had contact with teen parents, like hospitals and the Department of Public Aid.
- The Charlotte (N.C.) Public Library’s liaison to the Hispanic community realized that to promote the library’s “Early Intervention Reading Program” adequately, she also needed to emphasize the importance of storytelling and reading to children. She laid this groundwork by taking flyers to health fairs, festivals, schools, churches, and other organizations that serve Hispanics; speaking on radio programs; and writing articles that appeared in a local Hispanic newspaper.
3. Customize the Message

Relationship marketing encourages libraries to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with their customers and find ways to see and treat each customer as an individual. By staying in touch with changing customer needs and fulfilling them, libraries increase user satisfaction and repeat business. Befitting a library’s mission, this practice can also maximize resources, as evidenced by research indicating that attracting a new customer costs three to nine times more than retaining a current customer. A customized promotion communicates information likely to be of interest to a particular individual. It may also include a personalized salutation. However, note that using the latter without the former can backfire, generating hostility (consider personalized spam or telemarketers who ask for you by first name). These techniques have traditionally been the realm of libraries with relatively small customer bases or with very frequent patrons whom staff get to know personally. Information technology makes it feasible to customize promotions in larger settings as well. For example:

- When two branches of the West Lothian (Scotland) Public Library Service were ready to re-open after being closed for renovation, the library sent a welcome pack with a letter, schedule of events, bookmarks, booklists, balloons, and more, to registered borrowers who had not used the library during the six months before it closed. As a control, librarians also tracked use among another group of similarly lapsed borrowers at another library. The personal invitation to return to the library succeeded. Of the two groups of borrowers who received packs, 32.5 percent and 25.1 percent returned to the library; of the control group, only 4.2 percent came back.

- Since mid-1997, the MatchBook service of the Morton Grove (Ill.) Public Library has allowed patrons who complete an interest profile to receive a monthly, automatically generated list of new materials suited to their tastes.

4. Look for Opportunities to Add-On, or “Do You Want Fries with That?”

When possible, tack promotion onto service provision. At the most basic level, this occurs when the circulation clerk checking out feng shui books to a patron mentions that the library has an upcoming program on that topic or slips a program flyer in one of the books. The library can also display a selection of feng shui materials in the room where the program is held or en route to it. Remember, too, that great customer service can help build relationships, foster patron loyalty, and lead to outstanding word-of-mouth promotion. For example:

- The Monterey County (Calif.) Free Libraries both provided a valuable service and obtained favorable exposure for the library when it brought its bookmobile to an emergency shelter for hundreds forced from their homes by heavy flooding.

- The Westport (Conn.) Public Library places books in doctors’ office waiting rooms, each containing a letter inviting the reader to the library for...
5. Collaborate

Working with other agencies and organizations can increase effectiveness in both service provision and promotion, as shown in the Woodson Regional Library example above. Collaborations can range from very informal cooperation to highly structured partnerships. Whatever form it takes, a collaborative effort will be most successful when communication between parties is open and relationships develop between individuals as well as institutions. For example:

- In a twist on the waiting room reading collection, the Fullerton (Calif.) Public Library’s bookmobile has attracted customers waiting for medical services by following a local hospital’s healthmobile route through the Latino community. The library has appeared on posters hung in libraries, health clinics, child-care centers, correctional facilities, and on twenty billboards in the Twin Cities.

- In Decatur, Illinois, the library, hospitals, and schools cooperatively formed Baby TALK (Teaching Activities for Learning and Knowledge), a nonprofit organization committed to early childhood development and parenting education. Baby TALK’s many services include a hospital visit after delivery that introduces the program; library lapsit programs for children aged one to three; and family story times. The program has been replicated in twenty-eight states and Canada.

- The Chicago Public Library, Chicago Police Department, the Chicago Transit Authority, and the Chicago Public Art Group joined forces to recruit talented high school students to paint a city bus with a route between two branches. The “Knowledge Express,” a unique and highly visible advertisement on wheels, features the students’ original artwork and the caption, “Two Libraries Under Blue Skies. Albany Park and Douglass Branch Libraries.”

6. Cultivate Confederates

Similar to collaborating, this approach focuses on building relationships with influential members of a particular community to better serve and reach other group members. The input the confederate provides helps the library better understand the needs of that segment of the population and overcome barriers to service, such as those presented by culture, language, or age. The library earns the confederate’s trust by responding to his or her feedback and shaping desirable collections, services, and programs. The confederate becomes a library advocate whose approval increases other community members’ knowledge of and confidence in the library. For example:

- The Charlotte (N.C.) Public Library’s liaison to the Hispanic community, whose efforts were introduced previously, also developed relationships with Hispanic mothers living in areas with concentrated Hispanic populations. These “Mom Leaders” invited the liaison into their homes to present programs. They also told neighbors, friends, and family about the service.

- Dwindling attendance at the Tuckahoe (N.Y.) Public Library’s monthly “Stories in Japanese” program prompted librarians to talk with a group of Japanese residents. Their input helped the library design programs of greater interest to the Japanese community and also opened up the extremely effective avenue of word-of-mouth promotion. Consequently, more Japanese residents began attending these programs and using the library in other ways more frequently, too.

7. Pitch Your Message to the Media

Cultivating media contacts can increase the likelihood of library press releases being published and public service announcements aired. Some media outlets may even be willing to donate regular space to library messages. In addition to seeking “free” publicity (which always requires some expenditure of resources, most notably staff time), budgeting for advertising can be a powerful promotional tool. Paid advertising gives the library much more control over whether, where, and when its messages are disseminated. It may also make media more disposed to provide free publicity at other times. For example:

- The Manatee (Fla.) Public Library System staff members write a weekly column for the local newspaper that highlights library resources in a featured subject area.

- The Morris County (N.J.) Library reaches approximately 110,000 listeners each week with the two-minute radio spot it has been airing for more than a decade during morning drive time.

- The $100,000 that the St. Louis (Mo.) Public Library has allotted annually for advertising in recent years has also helped the library receive in-kind media contributions, totaling more than $260,000 per year.

8. Hit ‘Em Where They Live (and Work and Shop . . .)

Disseminate the library’s message where people spend time each day. Make it as easy as possible for people seeking information about the library to find it. The library newsletter itself may exemplify this principle, especially when distributed in multiple forms—hardcopy, electronically via the Web site, and electronically via e-mail to registered subscribers. Communicating throughout the community also increases the probability that those not actively seeking information about the library will encounter it anyway in the course of their daily pursuits. For example:

- The Schaumburg Township (Ill.) District Library distributed information about the library, including photographs and statistics, on tray placemats handed to between 500 and 2,500 customers a day at two area McDonald’s restaurants during National Library Week.

- Five public library districts near Stockholm, Sweden, created a newspaper touting the benefits of library use and distributed 80,000 copies at railway and bus stations. Data collected several weeks later showed that over 30 percent of commuters received the paper, of these, more
than 80 percent took it home or to work, and 20 percent learned about new library services through it.  

- When the Sno-Isle (Wash.) Regional Library System initiated kindergarten class visits at the start of the school year, the number of cards given out to kindergarteners increased by 19 percent over the previous year.  

- Over a six-month period, staff at the Lucy Robbins Welles (Newington, Conn.) Library visited fifty area businesses to talk to employees about library services. The corporate community’s enthusiasm for the program led city administrators, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Development Commission to contribute $5,000 for it to continue.  

9. Visibility, Visibility, Visibility

Ensuring that the library has a presence at local events reminds the community of the library’s existence and services. It also helps position the library in people’s minds as an active, integral part of the community. In addition to participating in special occasions or community celebrations, staff, board members, or volunteers may represent the library at meetings on a regular (e.g., for the city council, the school board, etc.) or periodic (e.g., for special interest clubs, service organizations, etc.) basis. Representation at other routine community happenings (e.g., a farmers’ market or Friday night concert series) also helps raise the library’s profile. Additionally, the library can create its own events, both to provide service and to promote itself. For example:

- The Indianapolis-Marion County (Ind.) Public Library entered a float in the 125th Anniversary Indianapolis 500 Festival parade, promoting itself to the 250,000 people in attendance and winning an award to boot.  

- To celebrate the 350th birthday of the city, librarians from the Springfield (Mass.) City Library, community leaders, and city schools sponsored a four-month “Seussamania” festival honoring hometown author Theodor (Dr. Seuss) Geisel. Dressed as the Cat in the Hat or Sneetches, librarians visited each classroom in nine elementary schools to introduce less-familiar Seuss books. The library displayed hundreds of pieces of children’s artwork portraying Seuss characters and hosted a performance of The Lorax. Circulation of children’s books increased 50 percent systemwide during the festival, which the media covered extensively.  

- The Evanston (Ill.) Public Library’s Speaker’s Bureau offers local organizations a variety of free twenty to forty-five minute programs, such as “Raising Readers,” “Business Information Resources at the Evanston Public Library,” and “Online at Home: The Cheapest, Easiest Solutions.”  

10. Blitz ‘Em

Repeated exposure to the same message can increase the chances that the information will be noted and remembered. Although resources will likely not permit this approach for everything, trying to get the word out through as many avenues as possible can be particularly effective, especially for a concentrated period. For example:

- More than twenty-five years ago, public, school, university, and special librarians from Fairbanks, Alaska, organized a one-year campaign to increase community awareness of the cramped, underused, and understaffed public library. The librarians produced photographic spreads of library facilities for area newspapers; enlisted local movie theaters, television stations, and radio stations to play film and sound clips advertising library services and collections; reviewed works in the collection in area newspapers and on the radio on a weekly basis; exhibited twentieth century bestsellers in the library and at the Fairbanks International Airport; and disseminated lists of works about Alaska and its history. As a result, the community’s knowledge and use of the library increased and the city of Fairbanks funded a new library building.  

- Throughout National Library Week in 1997, the Carson City (Nev.) Public Library sponsored hourly programs, promoted through flyers, posters, articles in the local newspaper and the city’s parks and recreation newsletter, mailings to other city departments and area libraries, word-of-mouth, and radio and television public service announcements, including a rap aired on a local cable station. Library attendance for the week increased to 133 percent of average attendance.  

- During Britain’s National Libraries Week, the Birmingham (England) Libraries offered 210 events, including quizzes, parties, tours, and giveaways. The library cosponsored the festivities with a local bookstore, promoting them via three hundred street signs; twenty-eight radio ads; and television, radio, and newspaper coverage. Both bookstore and library staffers also wore sweatshirts publicizing the week. The number of patrons registering that week increased by as much as 100 percent at some library locations, and more than 50 percent of those surveyed at nonlibrary locations knew it was National Libraries Week.  

Conclusion

Others’ experiences can be an excellent source of inspiration, particularly when reflecting not only on how an idea was implemented but also why it worked as well as it did. I hope that the guidelines and examples described here spark a successful promotional venture at your library. If so, I encourage you to share your story, optimally in print, to continue the chain of ideas. Swapping tales of accomplishment at meetings can prime attendees’ creative pumps. However, by publishing your experience it becomes accessible to a much wider audience, transcending the bounds of location and time. Submitting items to Public Libraries’ “Tales from the Front” and similar news columns in other (preferably indexed) journals provides a real service to the profession. Yet even with resources like this, it can be difficult to locate thought-provoking illustrations of marketing practices. The creation of a local or national idea database on the Web could greatly increase the availability of inspiring anecdotes. Such a resource would categorize, briefly describe, and give contact information for worthy promotional efforts that librarians could self-submit via a simple Web form. Natural candidates to embark upon such a venture include state libraries or marketing/promotion sections of library associations. Easy access to good ideas can help build vibrant, heavily used, and well-supported libraries, ideals worth pursuing.
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Thank you. Thank you very much. Shhhh! (I’ve always wanted to do that.) Thank you, Luis, for that wonderful introduction and for the certificate. It’s an honor to be here today. I do have a confession to make. Nearly fifty years ago, I lost a library book before I even read it. I think the title was *How to Raise a Normal Child*. It’s now way overdue. I’m either going to have to get you to forgive the fine or ask my son to pay it.

Speaking of my son, I imagine you’re thinking: “Hey, we invited Bill Gates the software guy, not Bill Gates the lawyer.” I want you to know I don’t feel slighted by that. I also want you to know that Bill loves libraries, and he deeply wanted to be here today. I’m the proof. You see, he still has some respect and affection for his dad, and he never asks me to stand in for him unless it’s an event that he was very eager to attend and deeply regrets that he can’t. So I bring you his regards—and on behalf of Bill, Melinda, and our entire foundation, I’d like to welcome you to our hometown of Seattle.

I’m glad to be here today to mark your sixtieth anniversary and to celebrate a milestone in the history of public libraries: thanks to your efforts to widen the avenues of learning for all Americans, today there is at least one computer with Internet access in virtually every public library in America. Thank you and congratulations!

Now that we at the Gates Foundation have completed the major part of our library investment—connecting libraries to the Internet—I want to ask you today to be our partners in a new initiative to ensure that libraries connected today will still be connected a month from now, a year from now, a generation from now.

I also want to express my personal thanks to you for what libraries have meant to me, to my family, and to so many others. As a boy growing up in this area, I spent many happy hours with my sister at the local library—just three short blocks from our house. The library was definitely part of the scene—a central activity of my world. I started life as an enthusiastic reader, and I never stopped.

Years later, I had the pleasure of bringing my own children to the public library—though almost as soon as Bill was old enough to walk, he went by himself. Every summer he would attack the titles on the summer reading list. This may be hard to imagine, but he saw it as competition, and he always ended up at the top of the list, tied for the lead with three girls. He is still an avid reader. I am very proud of him. He is only forty-eight-years-old, but he reads at the fifty-two-year-old level. Libraries helped unleash his dreams and ambitions, so if you don’t like the result, you have only yourselves to blame.

The Gates family owes a lot to libraries, and so does the American family. The way I see it, there are two central obligations of citizens in a democracy: fulfilling your talents and choosing your leaders. Neither can happen without knowledge; knowledge cannot come without information; and information—for many of our citizens—cannot come without libraries. Libraries allow citizens to borrow what they can’t afford to buy.

Abraham Lincoln, who borrowed books constantly, once said: “Reading gives access to whatever has already been discovered by others.” Voracious reading helped prepare Abraham Lincoln to be president. But reading—and respect for reading—also played a role in the minds of the voters who elected him president. In a democracy, every vote counts, so the education of every person matters.

Bill and Melinda believe deeply in the equal worth of every human being, and they have tried to make their giving a force for advancing equality. So it was entirely fitting that libraries were the focus of Bill’s first effort in philanthropy.

Back in the mid-1990s, before there was any name for the digital divide, Bill and his colleagues at Microsoft understood that the country was splitting into a society of information haves and have-nots. So they began looking for a way to promote equal access to information technology. As you probably know, Bill is a highly strategic thinker. When he approaches a problem, he’s always seeking leverage: how can he do the greatest good for the largest number? That meant posing some questions: Who are the information have-nots? What are the barriers that separate them from information technology? What are the best ways to reach them for the least cost and the highest impact in an environment conducive to learning?

After exploring every option and consulting many experts, they concluded that the best way to give everyone access to the Internet was the same way we had given everyone access to books: the public library. So in 1997, Bill set the goal of the U.S. Library program: “If you can get to a library, you can get to the Internet.”

Over the past seven years, together with you and partners like Gateway and Microsoft, we’ve installed more than 47,000 computers in almost 11,000 libraries in small towns and big cities in every state in the country. We also held more than 12,000 computer-training sessions with librarians. You made it possible for millions of people—from every
age and circumstance of life—to be guided in the use of the computer and the Internet at no cost to themselves and little cost to the public.

I also want to pay tribute to our rapid deployment force of more than a hundred high-tech troops—the young women and men who moved out at a moment’s notice to get the computers installed, set up networks, test connections, offer training courses, and respond to calls for tech support. They were on the road to visit you two weeks out of every three, year in, year out, until we were done.

What do we have to show for it? Today, more than fourteen million Americans—roughly 10 percent of all Internet users—now access the Internet through computers in public libraries. People from minority groups, people with lower incomes, and people with less education are many times more likely to rely on public library computers for Internet access—using library computers to get a degree, find a job, gather medical information, or stay in touch with family.

One woman in West Virginia, where Melinda visited last month, told us she had been out of school for twenty-five years when she decided she needed a college degree. During her first day back at school at age forty-two, she realized she was the only person in class who didn’t know how to use a computer. She went and learned at the local library.

Another library patron we heard from lost her job at age fifty-two, and the first place she went was the public library. She researched jobs, improved her computer skills, and networked with friends. Eventually, an e-mail from a friend tipped her off on a job opening, and the computer skills she learned in the library helped her get the job.

Luckily for these two people and for millions more, today, if you can get to a library, you can get to the Internet. We accomplished that mission, and we are proud of that. But we are not satisfied.

This report, released today by the Gates Foundation and other library advocates, makes a compelling argument for the value of public access computing. But the report warns that it will be hard to sustain public access computing without more consistent funding.

It's helpful here to recall the example of Andrew Carnegie. He came to this country poor and never went to college. He owed much of his learning to the generosity of a wealthy man who opened his library to working boys every Saturday afternoon. Carnegie, who as you all know later donated staggering sums for the building of libraries, once said: “There was no use to which money could be applied so productive of good as the founding of a public library in a community that is willing to support it.”

There was the catch. He knew that his giving would not offer lasting benefit unless the public supported it, so his grants required a commitment from the community. Our circumstances are similar. We have completed our goal of connecting libraries to the Internet. Now we need the wider community to step up and help sustain public access computing.

That won’t be easy in today’s budget climate. When we launched this effort, closing the digital divide was a national priority in a time of budget surpluses. Today, it is a lesser priority at a time of budget deficits. The recent recession and loss of tax revenues have confronted libraries across the country with drastic
budget cuts. If we do not work together to establish reliable funding, public libraries in many parts of the country could lose this lifeline that connects so many people to the world of education, employment, health—and their families.

Today, if you want to find a job, start a business, or get a degree, it’s hard to do it without the Internet—and for many Americans, it’s hard to get on the Internet without getting to a library. That’s why—if we want to keep our American commitment to equality—we’ve got to keep the library doors open, the computers running, and the Internet connected.

Melinda was in West Virginia last month to meet with the governor and the legislature to talk about this challenge. As part of our effort, she announced the first round of our “Staying Connected” grants. These are two-to-one matching grants to states to help them maintain Internet access in their communities. We have made $5.8 million in grants to eighteen states so far.

This approach is the result of an intensive review of our efforts coupled with ongoing consultations with partners and experts in the field: This week, during the PLA conference, we will be meeting with select library leaders to refine these ideas and help put them into practice. Our goal is to build broader partnerships with state agencies, library associations, businesses, and nonprofits to advance a three-part agenda: improving the technology; offering the right training; and keeping libraries open.

First, we need to constantly improve the technology in libraries and make sure technical support is within reach. The computers installed at the beginning of the library program are now five years old—an eternity in computer years—and may be too slow to run newer programs. We must constantly renew our commitment to accessible technology and continuously replace the old with the new. If instead we let the equipment get old, then the computers in our public libraries may become more a reflection of society’s inequities than a remedy for them.

We are building a stronger, wider partnership to improve technology, and we’re asking for your help.

Second, we need to give librarians the right training. Librarians are the indispensable partners in bringing the Internet to everyone. But 40 percent of all libraries don’t offer any formal technology training for their staff. Part of our answer is Webjunction.org. It’s a Web site we’ve helped launch that offers librarians clear instructions on setting up computers, maintaining networks—even talking to city council members about funding. I hope you get a chance to make use of this site.

The library is one of the only places in America where low-income families can find computers and learn computer skills. Providing technical training for our librarians is central to preserving that vital service.

We are building a stronger, wider partnership to ensure good training, and we’re asking for your help.

Third, and most important of all, we have to keep libraries open. With the addition of free Internet access, libraries have become an even more important part of the community. Yet budget cuts are cutting off access to libraries. Here in Seattle, every city library has closed down for three weeks in the past two years because of budget constraints. Rural communities and small towns have been hit much harder. Some libraries have closed altogether. Even those that have closed only on Saturdays still come in, pay nothing, and learn computer skills. What does that do for working people who have only that day to prepare a resume or bring their children to read?

We are building a stronger, wider partnership to keep libraries open, and we’re asking for your help. Please join us by becoming a vocal advocate for your library. Get to know your state and local officials and show them the impact your library has.

In the midst of their budget debates, our government officials need to know that there is no place where the public gets more for its money than at the public library. Where else can the purchase of one book give a hundred people a chance to read that book? Where else can the purchase of six computers offer six hundred people of all ages a chance to use a computer?

During the Great Depression, use of libraries soared. People came to the library to learn how to fix cars; how to serve more economical meals; how to grow a vegetable garden. In tough economic times, library use jumps—even now. In March 2001, at the start of the recession, library circulation was 8 percent higher than projected. After September 11, 2001, circulation jumped 11 percent. I once stopped and talked to a young man in a Brooklyn library who was using one of the computers we donated; he told me he was working on his résumé. What better use is there for our public dollars than to give a man access to the tools he needs to write and send a résumé?

You don’t close hospitals during an epidemic. You don’t cut unemployment benefits during a recession. And you shouldn’t cut libraries during hard times.

That famous American librarian, Benjamin Franklin, was asked just after the close of the Constitutional Convention: “What have we got, a republic or a monarchy?” He famously answered: “A republic, if you can keep it.” Today, he might say: “A rising, thriving republic, if we can keep it connected.”

Today, somewhere in America, a grade-school teacher is assigning her class a paper on a famous American—perhaps Martin Luther King or Eleanor Roosevelt or George Washington. It’s the kind of assignment that can change a child’s life. Of the students who take this assignment home, some will have educated parents, homes with hundreds of books, a set of encyclopedias, a computer, the Internet, and money to buy what they don’t already have. Other students, with the same assignment, the same hopes, and the same dreams, will have uneducated parents, homes with no books, no encyclopedias, no computer, and no Internet. What they do have . . . is you . . . and your books . . . and a universe of information through a computer and a cable. They need these resources. And we need to make sure they will always have them. I am honored to be here today—on behalf of Bill and Melinda—to renew our commitment to this cause. Thank you.
PLA National Conference Highlights

Award-winning writer, poet, and film producer Sherman Alexie (The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven, Reservation Blues) addressed a record crowd as he brought to a close the largest ever Public Library Association (PLA) National Conference. Almost 8,700 library staff, exhibitors, authors, and guests packed the Washington State Convention and Trade Center from February 24 to 28. The conference brought more than $12 million to the city, making it one of the ten largest conventions scheduled in Seattle for 2004.

“Seattle clearly loves libraries, and the Public Library Association has loved being here,” said PLA President Luis Herrera. “The energy of this conference has been thrilling. The millions of Americans from all walks of life who depend on their public libraries for information, entertainment, and community engagement will be the beneficiaries of this experience. The smartest card in their wallet—now more than ever—is their library card!”

From the opening session with Pulitzer Prize-winner Anna Quindlen and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Director Bill Gates Sr., hundreds of workshops, events, and discussions drew standing room only crowds. Advocacy on behalf of libraries, funding, recruitment, technology, multicultural outreach, and youth services were among the key issues generating conversation and interest among attendees.

While describing her lifelong dream of becoming a writer, Quindlen remembered “standing in my public library as a teenager and trying to figure out where my book would sit on the shelf: between Proust and Ayn Rand.”

Other presenting authors included: Harlan Coben (Tell No One and Gone for Good), Peter Dexter (Paris Trout), Jayne Ann Krentz (Truth or Dare), Nancy Farmer (The House of the Scorpion) J. A. Jance (Exit Wounds), and Ridley Pearson (Middle of Nowhere).

The exhibit hall also was sold out and filled with almost eight hundred booths featuring library related products and services from firms like BBC Audiobooks America, EBSCO Information Services, Random House, and Tech Logic Corporation. See www.pla.org for conference handouts and other information.

Save the Date!

PLA 2006, PLA's 11th National Conference, will be held March 21–25, 2006, in Boston, Massachusetts.

Spring Symposium 2005

Another date to get on your calendar is March 7–9, 2005. That's when the PLA 2005 Spring Symposium will be held at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel in Chicago. PLA's Spring Symposium offers an excellent opportunity for librarians and library workers to learn, network, and share ideas with colleagues. Attendees will enjoy an invigorating Opening General Session, author luncheons, and more. Nearly eight hundred people joined us at our 2003 Spring Symposium; we hope you are planning to join us for the 2005 series. Check www.pla.org for updates and programming information.

PLA Special Event at ALA Annual Conference 2004

All PLA members are invited to attend the PLA President's Program and Awards Ceremony featuring Carl Hiaasen. The event will be held on Monday, June 28, 5–6:30 p.m. at the Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. This event includes PLA's annual service awards presentation as well as a keynote presentation by Carl Hiaasen, followed by a gala, music-filled soiree. Hiaasen has served as a regular columnist for the Miami Herald for the last sixteen years. He also is the author of several best selling novels, including Tourist Season, Double Whammy, Skin Tight, Native Tongue, Strip Tease, Stormy Weather, Lucky You, Sick Puppy, Basket Case, and HOOT, a Newbery Award-winning book for young readers. You won’t want to miss this exciting keynote presentation.

PLA also is sponsoring several educational programs during the ALA conference. See www.pla.org for a complete list of PLA programs and business meetings.

Public Libraries Theme Issue on Readers' Advisory

The fifth annual Public Libraries theme issue, scheduled for January/February 2005, will focus on readers’ advisory. As part of PLA’s goal to establish a literate nation, this issue will explore how readers’ advisory services are provided in libraries. Librarians and researchers with experience in this area are invited to submit manuscripts to be considered for the special issue.

See Public Libraries’ “Instructions to Authors” on page 66 of the January/February 2004 issue or “Editorial Guidelines” at www.ala.org/ala/pla/plapubs/publiclibraries/editorialguidelines.htm for length, format, and submission information. Manuscripts must be received by July 15, 2004, in order to be considered for this special issue. For more information contact Renée Vaillancourt McGrath, Feature Editor, at publiclibraries@aol.com.
BY the BOOK

Attracting, Educating, and Serving Remote Users Through the Web: A How-to-Do-it Manual for Librarians


In her preface to this collaborative work of ten professionals at the University of Nevada–Reno Libraries, editor Curtis gives us the now familiar reminder that users of the Internet have moved from the periphery to the center of the modern library's customer base. Two major shifts are changing the role of libraries: patrons increasingly expect to fill their research needs online, and they often want to do this without coming to the library. This volume concentrates on responses to such expectations in an academic community. However, public librarians will find valuable guidance and technical information for their own efforts to serve remote customers.

The authors argue convincingly for adequate support to off-site users. They explain that public and academic libraries have always been brokers of information, serving as the community's means of purchasing and distributing access to that expensive commodity. Now that much vital, current information is no longer housed locally in print, the library must be "a portal through which authenticated users gain access to information that is held and administered elsewhere." Since many users expect the same ease, convenience, and timely search turnaround they find elsewhere on the Web, these writers say libraries have little choice but to learn how to deliver such services.

The chapter introducing the remote user population describes demographics and research findings, and compares the methods libraries can use to assess their own remote user needs. The key concern is that remote users frequently lack the mental models and skills to devise effective searches, and that they also resist using the advanced search options available. These user traits challenge librarians to find software interfaces and online instruction methods that will compensate, without alienating customers.

A companion chapter introduces the virtual library. Online information seekers generally think "Web" rather than "library," and they look to library sites for what commercial sites have taught them to expect. They usually don't want to explore but prefer to make one quick information transaction. The authors therefore describe how to attract and hold such users, and how to build in the resources and guidance that will help them to be successful—and bring them back again. While this is a good overview of the topic, for a more comprehensive resource readers should see The Virtual Reference Librarian's Handbook, by Anne Grodzins Lipow (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2003), reviewed in the March/April 2004 issue of Public Libraries.

The following chapters address the transfer of traditional library tasks to the remote online realm. The chapter on electronic reference (again covered more fully in The Virtual Reference Librarian's Handbook) describes setting up human-mediated online reference work. Current awareness and document delivery services, the next topics, are mainly academic concerns, yet public librarians will increasingly find their customers requesting similar services. The library instruction chapter summarizes challenges in helping the remote population to use library resources online. The online instruction chapter discusses using the Web to integrate library resources into the classroom. Here again public libraries may see increasing demand, as more distance education students come to them for service.

The final two chapters look at general support issues. Most important for public libraries is the chapter on licensed resources, which explains the distinction between authentication of users and authorization of users access. It covers thoroughly the technological options available for access management, as well as strategies for helping remote users puzzle out the whole authentication/authorization labyrinth. The last chapter, on fund-raising and public relations, stresses that a library's Web site must build relationships with remote users. An interesting feature of this chapter is the generation-by-generation review of users' online expectations.

This book is accessible for readers new to online services. It has good examples and illustrations, and the authors maintain a Web site that updates all the Internet links mentioned in the book. Despite its academic bias, it is a useful read for public library staff planning for the growth of remote user demands.—Michael Austin Shell, Integrated Library Systems (ILS) Librarian, Jacksonville (Fla.) Public Library

Picture Books Plus: 100 Extension Activities in Art, Drama, Music, Math, and Science


New from ALA Editions, Picture Books Plus is written by a teacher/librarian team and is designed to help professionals working with children. It identifies the best picture books to use across the curriculum, focusing on five major curricula—art, drama, music, math, and science. Five of the book's six chapters each feature twenty picture-book titles with ideas for how to implement them within a specific curriculum area.

The first chapter provides an excellent explanation of the benefits of sharing picture books with children, and explains how picture books can be used to enhance children's learning experiences. Background information supporting each of the five curriculum areas is provided, along with nicely annotated lists of key terms related to each area (art techniques and color, stages of play for drama, musical terminology, math concepts, science skills, and language development terms). All follow the same format with descriptive explanations following italicized terms. The elements of picture-book art, book formatting, and vari-
ous types of media are also covered.

Each of the remaining five chapters features twenty picture books, complete with annotations and two extension activities. A listing of the required materials for each activity is included, as are detailed procedures and directions for implementation. The creative activities range from making paper to creating computer-generated art to making bubble-wrap fish pictures. In addition to the primary extension activity, a second suggested activity is also included for each chapter, and is again complete with all materials and directions. To clarify the extension activity directions, each chapter has between five and seven figures depicting sample work.

Two indexes allow teachers and librarians to easily reference specific authors/illustrators and titles. Complete bibliographic entries are found at the end of each chapter. The authors selected titles that, to the best of their knowledge, remain in print and/or are easy to locate.

Ideal for teachers, librarians, and adults who are involved with children, this book can extend into multiple areas. It can be a helpful resource to educators and librarians looking to enhance specific areas of the curriculum, and it would also be useful in both teacher and librarian graduate degree programs.

The authors list numerous ways Picture Books Plus could be used in both public library and school programming. Ideas for use in the public library setting include sharing some of the extension activities with youngsters after story-hour programs; planning a program for early childhood educators, home-schoolers, parents, and so on; or presenting a program to library science graduate students.

In a school setting, the school media specialist could share some of the stories and extension activities during a class’s library period, or they could use the book to present a program to classroom teachers on how to use good books across the curriculum. Teachers could use this book to create reading lists for their classes based on curricular needs, or simply as a resource for songs, recipes, activities, and great books. The authors hope this title will motivate its readers and extend their knowledge and use of children’s literature. They welcome feedback by users of the title, and include their e-mail addresses for easy correspondence.

Overall, a very useful tool for any adult looking to expand children’s appreciation for books into a lifelong love of literature.—Cathie Bashaw Morton, MLS, Teacher/Librarian, Somers (N.Y.) Library

Business Statistics on the Web
Find Them Fast—At Little or No Cost


Business Statistics on the Web is written for people working in the business field as a resource to assist them in gathering statistics online. Author Paula Berinstein notes that “prior to the explosion of the World Wide Web, the only place people could access decent business statistics were libraries, ‘where few businesspeople set foot’” (xxii). The author states in her preface that the book will not cover common library business sources such as LexisNexis at all. The book’s main audience is not reference librarians, but librarians can still benefit from the work as it provides numerous useful Web sites and tips for better statistics searching.

The author opens the book with a few introductory chapters explaining the types of statistics and how to read them, who publishes statistics, and general search tips. Berinstein then goes on to break down a different set of statistics in each chapter, covering U.S. industry statistics, non-U.S. industry statistics, market research, economic and financial statistics, company information, and demographics and population statistics. The book concludes with one chapter on special searching tips and another chapter for planning how to obtain information that has proved elusive.

Interspersed throughout the book are sample searches done by the author for various statistics. These sections, highlighted in gray, are useful; Berinstein takes the reader step by step through her reasoning and searching processes. They confirm some searching ideas and give excellent ideas for looking at reference queries. Each chapter can be scanned quickly, handy for working with a patron at the reference desk.

Berinstein, an experienced researcher, provides a number of practical searching tips, as well as links to hundreds of useful Web sites. At times it would have helped if the sites listed had an annotation to go with them or, if included, a longer one. When provided, many of her annotations are too brief, and too many sites are just listed without any explanation at all. The author notes in her preface that she left out many annotations in case the content of a site changes, so she would not mislead the reader. While her point is valid, some information, such as who was running a site at the time of publication, would be quite useful.

The author’s definitions in chapter two of various kinds of statistics are handy for reference librarians, especially the tips for avoiding skewed data by quickly and critically evaluating statistics. Berinstein cites a broad number of Internet sites, carefully pointing out which were free sites and which were pay sites at the time of the book’s publication. As will happen in books like this, a few of the URLs have changed since publication. The author includes her e-mail address, so users who find good links to use or discover links in her book that do not work can contact her.

This book is a good personal purchase for librarians who want to brush up on their business reference skills, especially since it walks the reader through so many searches. Business Statistics on the Web is recommended for librarians interested in business reference and libraries with a strong circulating business collection.—Julie Elliott, Reference and Instruction Librarian/Coordinator of Public Relations and Outreach, Indiana University-South Bend

Something Funny Happened at the Library
How to Create Humorous Programs for Children and Young Adults


While there are many humorous aspects of library work that are unintentional, this title helps librarians serving youth to create programs emphasizing humor. Author Reid has written on music titles for youth librarians, but Something Funny Happened at the Library incorporates many different media in programs from preschool age up through high school.

Reid’s style of writing is practical and humorous in itself. His techniques offer people chances to incorporate silly, fun ideas at all levels of performance comfort. The book is broken into age-appropriate activities, and further into program themes. Special, fun programs are emphasized, but ways to make traditional storytimes and school visits more humorous are also featured. For example, the “Five Tips for a Memorable Tour” listed on page 62 will likely liven up any school visit!

Fun programs for younger children include “Bad Hair Day,” “Picky Eaters,” and more. They also include ideas for books, musical, and movement activities. For older children, a few themed story programs are listed, along with popular theme parties. Activities are described for events centering around the Wayside School and Captain Underpants series, among others. When Reid delves into the hardest age group to reach with humor, teenagers, the ideas are equally useful. These ideas include writing activities, a comedy club, and readers’ theater.

Some raps and a lengthy list of “The Funniest Books in
The Accidental Webmaster


Halfway through her fourth book on Internet issues, librarian Still makes the following assertion: “One of the main reasons to have a Web site is to create a sense of community among your regular visitors and to encourage visits from guests” (83). This insight informs everything else in this novel guide for beginning webmasters.

Still’s primary interest here is the people whom a Web site brings together. On one side are the managerial folk of the organization or business that wants a presence on the Internet. On the other are the site’s users, both the organization’s own members and staff and its visiting online public. In the middle is Still’s target reader: the volunteer or staff person with a modicum of Web skills and interest who is considering, or has already taken on, the responsibility for building and maintaining a dynamic Web site.

This is not a technical handbook, though Still occasionally discusses technical issues in terms of their interplay with people-oriented concerns. Instead, the book describes deftly and with good humor the wide range of needs, expectations, and sometimes unthoughtful demands the accidental webmaster may meet. More important, it maps the technical details. Both are intended reader may be doing a Web site on the side or in the context of other job duties. To do so competently requires avoiding both burnout and misunderstandings between webmaster and clients.

The next three chapters give a concise layperson’s summary of what to consider in choosing and dealing with an Internet site host, in designing a site, and in selecting and maintaining content. Still underscores two core principles. First, do not create a site that cannot be easily updated, either in terms of technical design or in terms of how and by whom routinely updated content will be provided. Second, remember that “people skim on the Web—they don’t read” (47). Carefully designed first impressions and intuitively obvious navigational helps are crucial, both to capturing first-time visitors and to bringing back and serving regulars. Still is most interested in teaching how to design a Web site can create an online community for its parent organization. She begins with a thorough exploration of the mechanics and administrative responsibilities involved in operating e-mail postings and discussion lists, online bulletin boards, chat rooms, and interactive Web sites. Further chapters discuss marketing and promotion, tracking of usage patterns, fund-raising, and legal concerns such as copyright and privacy. Finally, nine chapters consider the special audiences and concerns of specialized sites such as those for advocacy, religious groups, genealogy, celebrity fandom, and small business.

The Accidental Webmaster shares key traits with its companion volume, The Accidental Systems Librarian, by Rachel Singer Gordon (Medford, N.J.: Information Today, 2003), reviewed in the January/February 2004 issue of Public Libraries. Both reassure and guide the reader who has a new, technology-intensive role by describing the new landscape, the transfer of knowledge and competencies to that new work, and the resources available for learning the technical details. Both are more concerned to address the personal and interpersonal aspects of that role than to teach those details.
Still's book is not library-specific, as is Gordon's. It does, however, have the librarian's attention to how information management can build community, both the internal community of an organization and the online community of visitors who are not yet regular users. That makes this book a good first read for library staff who want to develop such projects as a staff intranet, a branch, or small library Web site, or a suite of Web pages (such as one for teens or seniors) on a larger library system's site. —Michael Austin Shell, Integrated Library Systems (ILS) Librarian, Jacksonville (Fla.) Public Library

School & Public Libraries Developing the Natural Alliance


The section is useful in that it may or may not have gone through a library or information studies master's program. The role of the school librarian and the children's librarian in a public system are distinct but complementary areas in our profession, but the relationship between these two branches of youth work can be fraught with misunderstanding and barriers that can seem insurmountable sometimes. The thrust of Ziarnik's book—as well as her day-to-day work as a school liaison librarian in a public library system—is to break down those barriers and suggest ways of getting to know each other and work toward a common goal: getting books and information into the hands of school children and teaching them information literacy. School and Public Libraries: Developing the Natural Alliance is a must-read for children's and school librarians who might have a suspicion that there has got to be a better way of doing things.

After giving a brief history of the two separate branches of the profession, Ziarnik discusses the strengths of each branch of children's work and notes the common goals each pursues. From there she discusses ways she and others have employed to initiate and cement relationships between public librarians and schools. The ideas offered in this section are at once both full of common sense and creative. The hardest part of the get-to-know-you stage, I believe, is finding time. Ziarnik warns the uninitiated that just "dropping by" to meet the school or public librarian may not be the most practical thing to do because of their schedules, and she suggests setting up a time convenient for all parties involved, whether the meeting is an introductory one or one involving planning and coordination of services.

Ziarnik also advances solid ideas for pooling resources and communicating needs to accomplish mutual goals. There is a chapter on grants and how they may be used to bring classes to the library on a field trip and many other joint programs. She concludes with a short section on resources for grant seekers. The section is useful in that it gives ideas for projects you might pursue with grant money, but it's not meant to be a guide to grant finding or writing.

Communication between teachers and librarians, whether in the school or the public library, is often not the best, and the students invariably suffer as a result. Who hasn't had a dozen or more students show up at their branch at one time or another, all asking for information on the same topic or a biography on the same group of individuals? Nothing is more frustrating when you've given away the last book on the subject after the first half dozen kids arrive, knowing that, if you had advance notice, you might have been able to pull more books from other branches. Ziarnik discusses this problem and suggests that a little communication between teachers and school librarians and between school and public librarians could help us get the right material in the hands of students when they need it.

In the last two sections of the book, there are diaries of typical workdays of public and
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school librarians. The inclusion of the diaries puzzled me at first, but it does give librarians in one setting an idea of the sort of situations each had to meet and overcome in the course of a day. This section, like the book itself, is more heavily skewed toward the public librarian’s side of the coin, which is the side she knows best. But Ziarnik is right when she says there should be a natural alliance between public and school librarians, and she goes a long way toward breaking down the misunderstandings each has of the other’s work.

In a time when funding for libraries and schools is getting tighter, and in some places being drastically cut, resource sharing is more important than ever. The sort of cooperation Ziarnik is working toward and advocating is important work and should be taken more seriously on both sides. This is a book that will not only get you thinking but get you networking with your natural ally as well as with educators in the classroom. If you serve children and feel strongly about helping children love learning and pursue it throughout their lifetimes, you will want to read this book.—

M. Barbara Mulrine, School Librarian, Manatee School for the Arts, Palmetto, Fla.

**Metadata Fundamentals for All Librarians**


The term “metadata” is familiar to many who use online resources, even if they can’t explain exactly what the word means. With *Metadata Fundamentals for All Librarians*, Priscilla Caplan aims not only to define the term, but also to teach librarians how to best use metadata applications in their libraries. Caplan, who currently works in digital library services and has a vast amount of experience with both MARC coding and metadata, mostly succeeds in reaching this goal.

While metadata has traditionally been a term associated with electronic resources, Caplan defines it as, “structured information about an information resource of any media type or format.” This loose interpretation allows for the inclusion of more resources, with the only constraints being that there must be structure to the information, and that it must follow a documented metadata scheme. The other important definitions that she establishes early in the book are those of the three types of metadata: descriptive, that which describes a resource; administrative, that which facilitates the management of resources; and structural, the “glue” holding information objects together.

The book is divided into two sections, with the first being “Principles and Practice.” Along with defining the term, Caplan also explains the different types of metadata and schemes. Early chapters on topics like creation and storage, classification and identifiers, and interoperability assist in laying a foundation for those new to the concept.

The second section, titled “Metadata Schemes,” discusses practical applications of metadata use. In this section, Caplan explores the use of the various types of metadata in projects like the TEL initiative for encoding electronic texts, and the Dublin Core. In each chapter, her explanations and examples are clear and thorough, allowing nonexperts to follow without becoming completely lost. For example, in the chapter dealing with the Dublin Core, she lists the needed syntax for HTML and XML line-by-line, to show the user exactly how it might look when used.

Other chapters in the second part of the book include further use of metadata in specific areas, including art and architecture, education, and environmental resources. She also includes chapters on both administrative and structural metadata, since most of the practical discussion concerns descriptive metadata. These chapters could prove useful to those librarians interested in projects such as photo digitization or the cataloging of electronic sources in a specific subject area.

With *Metadata Fundamentals for All Librarians*, Caplan has provided both a thorough overview of the topic and some practical ideas for its use. One caveat is that those new to the whole concept of metadata should not expect to become authorities on the topic simply by reading this book. The concepts are not ridiculously difficult, but they do take time to understand. However, this work should prove useful to many librarians, especially catalogers or those interested in digital librarianship, who need an introduction to metadata and its applications. For those looking only to answer the question, “What is metadata?” there’s little need to read beyond the first fifty pages.—Craig Shufelt, Lane Public Library, Oxford, Ohio

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LibQUAL+ Helps Libraries Survey Users’ Opinions

LibQUAL+ is a suite of services that libraries can use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users’ opinions of service quality. These services are offered to the library community by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The program’s centerpiece is a rigorously tested Web-based survey bundled with training that helps libraries assess and improve library services, change organizational culture, and market the library. The goals of LibQUAL+ are to:

• Foster a culture of excellence in providing library service
• Help libraries better understand user perceptions of library service quality
• Collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time
• Provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions
• Identify best practices in library service
• Enhance library staff members’ analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data

Audible and Freedom Scientific Launch Comarketing Agreement

Audible, a provider of digitally delivered spoken word audio, and Freedom Scientific announced an integrated marketing alliance. This agreement gives blind and vision-impaired Internet users easier access to daily audio subscriptions of national newspapers, weekly business and science magazines, and the 6,000-title audiobook collection available at Audible.com. Vision-impaired users of Freedom Scientific’s assistive technology products, including JAWS for Windows screen reader software and its line of PAC Mate accessible Pocket PC devices, will be eligible for a free trial membership to Audible’s 34,000 hours of spoken word audio.

JAWS and PAC Mate users interested in taking advantage of this offer can begin by accessing this link: www.freeds Scientific.com/fs_products/audible.asp.

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Short Story Index Now Available via EBSCOhost

EBSCO Publishing is pleased to announce the release of H.W. Wilson’s Short Story Index, a database of citation information for thousands of short stories, available via EBSCOhost.

Short Story Index is a detailed index of more than 76,500 stories from more than 4,025 collections. Short Story Index is searchable by author, title, subject, keyword, date, literary technique, and source, alone or in any combination. Subjects include theme, locale, narrative technique or device, and genre for pinpoint accuracy. This reference database grows by 4,000 records each year, and includes coverage dating back to 1984.

www.hwwilson.com www.ebsco.com

Sagebrush In-Hand v3.1 Upgrade Adds Portability to Library Management Systems

Sagebrush Corporation announced an upgrade to its In-Hand hand-held computer solution for libraries. With the update to In-Hand v3.1, librarians can use the new Lookup Title and Lookup Patron features to search for, verify, and cross-check patron and collection data without being confined to any particular location. Inventory tasks are also made easier with a new “mis-shelved materials” alert, which sounds whenever In-Hand encounters materials out of call number sequence.

The upgrade adds to the convenience already provided by previous versions, such as reduced inventory time, remote circulation, and remote in-house tracking by means of a built-in scanner and one-touch data synchronization.

www.sagebrushcorp.com

TOPICS Entertainment Announces Release of Instant Immersion Crash Course Titles

TOPICS Entertainment, Inc. has announced the release of Instant Immersion Crash Course audio—a lower-priced language-learning audiobook line. The first two in the series are Spanish and Inglés. Each three-disc Crash Course program compiles basic language lessons in pronunciation, grammar, and conversation. They are designed for the inquisitive, albeit busy, learner.

Instant Immersion Crash Course is the unique audio program offering a quick and comprehensive language-learning experience. Each course guides the listener through language basics and conversational skills with engaging lessons and thematic reinforcement. Demonstrating a pledge to quality and efficacy, these Crash Course titles are a great “first step” in foreign language acquisition.

www.topics-ent.com

Morningstar.com Library Edition Adds Help and Education Center

Morningstar.com Library Edition, a Web site created exclusively for libraries and their patrons, has added a new Help and Education Center. The new area of the site provides a glossary of key terms, online courses, reference guides, and training seminars to help library patrons learn about investing and improve their financial literacy.

Morningstar.com Library Edition is one of the first online information services that gives libraries comprehensive, independent investment research that can be made easily available to their patrons. In
addition to the new Help and Education Center, the service includes:

- Individual reports on 7,000 stocks and 13,000 mutual funds.
- Proprietary, independent Morningstar Analyst Reports on 1,000 of those stocks and 2,000 of those mutual funds.
- Screening tools that allow patrons to search on hundreds of data points.
- Stock and Fund Diagnostics analytical tools that explain—in plain English—key statistics, long-term performance, and complex methodology.
- Portfolio features that allow patrons to assemble stock and fund selections into a portfolio to see how the investments work together.
- Remote access from home that offers patrons 24-hour access to the most current stock and fund information.
- Online usage tracking allows librarians to see how patrons use the site.

www.morningstar.com

OverDrive Embraces Mobipocket E-Book Format

OverDrive, a vendor of e-books to retailers and libraries, announced broad support for Mobipocket, a software format that allows users to download and read e-books on smartphones, PDAs, and personal computers. Over 10,000 commercial titles in Mobipocket format will be available through OverDrive’s Content Reserve, available to global retailers and libraries.

Mobipocket’s free e-book reader provides instant access to and onscreen reading of thousands of e-books using mobile phones, as well any PDA or PC device. It is one of the fastest-growing e-book formats with over one million downloads since March 2000.

Mobipocket Reader includes features such as customizable display, built-in full-text search, lookup and dictionary features, foreign language support, and wireless Internet connectivity.

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National Geographic Society Licenses AGent Knowledge Management Tool

Auto-Graphics announces the signing of a contract with the National Geographic Society to license AGent, Auto-Graphics’ portal broadcast search tool. AGent allows users to simultaneously search multiple databases, full-text repositories, the Web, and local catalogs through a single search interface.

AGent will be set up to access a variety of local resources and databases as well as subscription-based applications used by National Geographic researchers and content creators. This intuitive information-discovery system retrieves results from selected resources and presents them in an orderly and easily understood format. AGent also enables users to launch a search across disparate databases and other reference resources, yet view results in their native result screen and format, ensuring copyright compliance. National Geographic will use the system as a time-saving comprehensive database research tool.

www.auto-graphics.com

Independent Online Booksellers’ Association

The Independent Online Booksellers’ Association (IOBA) is a trade organization of online booksellers formed in 1999. Widespread consumer acceptance of the Internet as a source for used and rare books has created significant growth in the industry; in 2002, U. S. consumers spent more than $500 million on used books, much of it online.

“In order to protect the online book buyer, who is unable to touch and inspect books prior to purchasing,” says Shirley Bryant, public relations director of IOBA, “we formed a group of booksellers who would agree to abide by a code of basic professional standards. For example, all IOBA members agree to offer complete refunds if their merchandise fails to live up to advertised descriptions. IOBA also intercedes to resolve any problems that may arise with a purchase from one of our members.”

IOBA’s Web site has recently been updated to include the latest issue of its quarterly online newsletter, The IOBA Standard, as well as the organization’s Code of Ethics, a complete member list, educational materials, and links to book-related Web sites. IOBA is just completing a new pocket-sized pamphlet of book descriptive terms and definitions to help both book buyers and new booksellers to understand ‘book world’ terminology.

www.ioba.org

netLibrary 2004 Recently Launched

Based on recent usability testing and customer feedback, netLibrary has re-engineered its site to provide libraries and their patrons with improved reliability, greater performance, a more intuitive interface, and non-English language capability.

NetLibrary’s interface is now available with a choice of display languages. Visitors to the site will be able to select a default language (currently English, Spanish, or Traditional Chinese), with full navigation and search capabilities available in the selected language. Additional language selections will become available as new foreign language collections are added to the netLibrary catalog.

NetLibrary’s site now features new technology that improves overall site performance and enhances stability. The company has invested in new Web, search, and authentication database servers to provide greater stability and faster page loads.

The new streamlined interface features 50 percent fewer graphics for faster page loads, and incorporates design elements that make it more accessible to users with disabilities. NetLibrary has also made it easier for users to locate and view titles using the streamlined search interface. Now users can open e-books directly through the search results page. Bookmarks, notes, and the eBookshelf have been consolidated in a single location to provide users with one-click access to all their favorite titles, notes, and more. NetLibrary has even added linked subjects in the Bibliographic Information to provide sideways searching for related titles within a subject.

www.netlibrary.com

Audible.Com Now Offers Listening Library’s Audiobooks in Downloadable Format

Audible and Listening Library, an imprint within the Random House Audio division of Random House, announced the availability of audiobooks for download that are geared toward younger listeners. More than eighty Listening Library titles are available at Audible.com.

The launch list for this initiative includes a broad range of titles including: Philip Pullman’s The Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife, and The Amber Spyglass; A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L’Engle, Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis, Pippi Longstocking by Astrid Lindgren, Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh, along with Newbery Award winners such as Hoor by Carl Hiaasen and From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E. L. Konigsburg.

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