



# PUBLIC LIBRARIES

PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 48 • NUMBER 6 • NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009 • ISSN 0163-5506





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## FEATURES

### 34 Addressing Special Needs and At-Risk Populations in Library Education Programs

JEFF KATZ

Many librarians find themselves unprepared to work with special needs and at-risk individuals. This article argues that such coursework and training must be viewed as essential for all library staff members.

### 38 Problem Situations, *Not* Problem Patrons

STEVEN SLAVICK

The author outlines training tips and methods that can defuse common library situations that all too often escalate into problems.

### 43 Welcoming Newcomers with Practical Library Programs

EMILY KLOPSTEIN, LISA MURILLO, LOU PETTERCHAK,  
AND BECKY RUSSELL

Tu Biblioteca Hoy/Your Library Today is a very successful programming series for new immigrants and economically or educationally disadvantaged residents offered at six Denver Public Library (DPL) branches. DPL supervisors who have implemented the program at their branches share their experiences and lessons learned.

## DEPARTMENTS

### 3 News from PLA

KATHLEEN HUGHES

### 4 From the President

SARI FELDMAN

### 7 Tales from the Front

JENNIFER T. RIES-TAGGART

### 9 Perspectives

NANCI MILONE HILL

### 13 Statistically Speaking

DENISE M. DAVIS

### 20 Book Talk

BRENDAN DOWLING

### 23 Internet Spotlight

MICHAEL PORTER AND  
DAVID LEE KING

### 26 Bringing in the Money

LEE PRICE

### 31 Passing Notes

MICHAEL GARRETT FARRELLY

### 48 By The Book

JULIE ELLIOTT

### 53 New Product News

VICKI NESTING

## EXTRAS

### 2 Editor's Note

### 6 Verso—Pangs? Yes. Regrets? No.

### 56 Index to Advertisers

COVER AND TABLE OF CONTENTS ARTWORK BY JIM LANGE DESIGN.



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## Editor's Note

It's not exactly a secret among public librarians that working with the public can be challenging. This issue features three articles that probe this subject. In "Addressing Special Needs," Jeff Katz argues that librarians are unprepared to work with a segment of their population that may be most in need of library services: special needs and at-risk individuals. He goes on to argue that MLS programs should focus on preparing librarians to effectively serve these groups. In "Problem Situations, *Not* Problem Patrons," author Steven Slavick outlines methods for defusing tension in four common problem scenarios. Readers will want to adopt his practical and methodical approach. In "Welcoming Newcomers," the authors offer a shining example of outreach to their underserved population, with a successful program for welcoming Denver's new immigrants and economically or educationally disadvantaged residents.

Switching gears, have you heard of *Kiki* (www.kikimag.com) a new-ish entry in the girl's magazine market, that bills itself as being "for girls with style and substance"? Take a look at Michael Garrett Farrelly's column on page 31 for a revealing interview with *Kiki*'s founder—I think you'll be impressed.


Finally, have you made your PLA 2010 plans yet? Our opening general session speaker, Nicholas D. Kristof, is interviewed in this issue on page 20. His book, *Half the Sky*, has been enthusiastically passed around the PLA office over the past few months, and we're looking forward to hearing his talk! Read the interview and then check out the book.

Hope to see you at PLA 2010!

Kathleen M. Hughes, Editor; khughes@ala.org

Kathleen is reading *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife* by Francine Prose.

## Public Libraries Seeks Referees

*Public Libraries* is a peer-reviewed journal; as such we only publish articles that have been approved and recommended by referees (experts in the field). When authors submit articles to the journal, Editor Kathleen Hughes asks one or more referees to evaluate the manuscript, make suggestions to the author, and recommend whether to publish the piece. Referees generally review about four articles per year. If you are interested in acting as a referee, send an e-mail to Hughes (at khughes@ala.org) including information about your area of expertise or interest. 



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# News from PLA

## Engage. Explore. Experience. @ PLA 2010

Connect with experts and peers alike. Register today at [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org) for the Public Library Association's (PLA) 13th National Conference, March 23–27, Portland, Oregon. **REGISTER EARLY AND SAVE! Early Bird Deadline:** December 16, 2009; **Advance Deadline:** February 19, 2010.

## All-Star Lineup for PLA 2010

Tickets for events requiring additional fees can be purchased at [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org).

### Preconference Luncheon featuring Patrick Somerville Tuesday, March 23

Patrick Somerville's first book of stories, *Trouble*, was named 2006's Best Book by a Chicago Author by *Time Out Chicago*, and his first novel, *The Cradle*, was published in March 2009. His writing has appeared in *GQ* and *Esquire*. (Additional fee.)

### Nancy Pearl presents "Book Buzz" Wednesday, March 24

Join Nancy Pearl and assorted publishing friends as they talk about some of the best upcoming books. Pearl recommends books regularly on NPR's *Morning Edition*. Her books include *Book Crush* and *Book Lust*. (Open to all registered conference attendees.)

### Opening General Session featuring Nicholas D. Kristof Wednesday, March 24

For more than twenty years, *New*

*York Times* journalist and Pulitzer Prize-winner Nicholas D. Kristof has been at the forefront of world issues. His recent book (co-written with wife Sheryl WuDunn) *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* charts the oppression of women in developing countries. (Open to all registered conference attendees.)

### Adult Author Luncheon with Scott Turow Thursday, March 25

Scott Turow made a huge splash in the book world with his debut novel *Presumed Innocent*. He has won a number of literary awards, including the Heartland Prize in 2003 for *Reversible Errors* and *Time* magazine's Best Work of Fiction 1999 for *Personal Injuries*. His latest novel, *Innocent*, will be published in May 2010. (Additional fee.)

### Young Adult Author Luncheon with Virginia Euwer Wolff Thursday, March 25

Virginia Euwer Wolff has made an indelible impression on the young adult landscape over the past twenty years. Her books include the Make Lemonade trilogy, *Bat 6*, *Probably Still Nick Swansen*, and *The Mozart Season*. She received the National Book Award for *True Believer*. (Additional fee.)

### Audio Publishers Dinner Thursday, March 25

This year's speakers include Chelsea Cain (Archie Sheridan and Gretchen Lowell series); Sue Grafton (Kinsey Milhone mysteries); actress Judy Kaye, who voices Milhone on the

audiobooks; and Marcia Muller, recently named a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America. (Additional fee.)

### Adult Author Luncheon with Luis Urrea Friday, March 26

Author, poet, and essayist Luis Alberto Urrea was a 2005 Pulitzer Prize finalist and was recently inducted into the Latino Literature Hall of Fame. Urrea's writing has concentrated largely on the Tijuana border culture. He has written eleven books, including *The Devil's Highway*. (Additional fee.)

### Children's Author Luncheon with Kadir Nelson Friday, March 26

Kadir Nelson began his career as an award-winning illustrator of many children's books. His authorial debut, *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*, was a *New York Times* bestseller and won the Sibert Medal. He has recently created a book called *Change Has Come: An Artist Celebrates Our American Spirit* about the historic election of Barack Obama. (Additional fee.)

### Closing Session with Sarah Vowell Saturday, March 27

Sarah Vowell is the author of four bestselling books and has been a contributing editor for NPR's *This American Life* since 1996. Vowell's latest book, *The Wordy Shipmates*, a history of American Puritans, was published in 2008 and she is currently at work on a history of nineteenth-century Hawaii. (Open to all registered conference attendees.)



**SARI FELDMAN** is President of the Public Library Association and Executive Director of Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library; [sfeldman@cuyahogalibrary.org](mailto:sfeldman@cuyahogalibrary.org); [http://twitter.com/sari\\_feldman](http://twitter.com/sari_feldman).

Sari is reading *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn and *Love and Summer* by William Trevor.

# Planning for Portland

It may be too early to pack, but it's not too early to plan for the 2010 Public Library Association (PLA) National Conference. I hope you'll join me March 23–27, 2010, in Portland at the Oregon Convention Center.

I am currently reading *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas Kristof, our conference keynote speaker, and Sheryl WuDunn. Reporting on the challenges faced by women in Asia and Africa, the authors reveal the power of education and economic development to reduce poverty and improve the lives of girls and women throughout the world. Kristof has much to share with librarians—who have always known the power of education and information to change lives for the better—and his address is sure to be provocative. He has also written about the transformative power of reading, dedicating his July 4, 2009, *New York Times* column to summer reading and its impact on the learning trajectory of students living in different economic circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Before you attend the keynote address, I hope you'll take part in one of our preconference programs. The PLA Program Committee has created an enticing schedule of options for public library professionals, including programs on gaming and graphic novels; Readers' Advisory 2.0; floating collections; technology training; green buildings and building interactive children's areas; advocating for teen services; and booktalking.

A top-shelf leadership preconference, "Leadership for a New Era: Meeting the Challenge," is also available. This interactive development program is an opportunity for public library professionals to expand their leadership skills and become better prepared to manage the challenges public libraries will face in the coming years. Attendance is by application only. The application form is available at [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org).

"Turning the Page: Building Your Library Community," PLA's advocacy program, will be offered to all PLA members. This program provides librarians and library supporters with the training, skills, and resources to create community partnerships, build alliances, and increase funding for their libraries. This program is primarily offered to library systems participating in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Opportunity Online hardware grants program, but is being offered free of charge to the first two hundred registrants on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration is open only to PLA members who are also registered for PLA 2010.

It wouldn't be the PLA National Conference without a nod to books and reading. Nancy Pearl will offer her ever popular "Book Buzz" event on Wednesday, March 24, to set the tone for the rest of conference. In addition to Kristof, bestselling novelist Scott Turow, Coretta Scott King Award winner Kadir Nelson, and acclaimed young adult novelist Virginia Euwer Wolff will also be joining us. And get ready to learn and laugh with author Sarah Vowell, whose most recent book, *The Wordy Shipmates: A History of American Puritans*, takes


a witty look at America's Puritan roots. She'll be the keynote speaker at the closing session.

As you can see, there will be plenty of exciting programs and speakers at PLA 2010, but formal sessions are only part of what the conference has to offer. Being part of a public library "happening" and sharing and learning with colleagues, old and new, are what make PLA 2010 the premiere conference for advocates and employees of public libraries. Continuing education is a critical investment during the economic downturn. Sharing stories around public library advocacy, work efficiencies, simplified training, focused service, and green building efficiencies are among the many topics that bring a return on investment beyond the cost of attending the conference.

The library exhibits are a fantastic way to efficiently do a little com-

parison shopping. The PLA National Conference is known for having a rich showing of vendors and their wares. We appreciate the commitment our vendors make to endorsing and supporting our conference, and we hope every conference participant spends part of their time in the exhibit hall.

While you're in Portland I urge you to visit Multnomah County Library (MCL). MCL is consistently one of the busiest public libraries in the United States. The staff at MCL has learned to streamline systems and deliver top-rated quality to their customers on a limited budget. Consider visiting MCL's central library or taking the time to learn about their nationally recognized youth services program as additional opportunities to learn new and effective ideas to take home from the conference.

PLA 2010 promises to be a blockbuster event loaded with continuing education and networking opportunities. Visit [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org) for the complete conference schedule, hotel information, online registration, and more. And don't forget, PLA is offering early bird registration at a discounted rate through December 16, 2009. Visit [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org) to register today or get more information. See you in Portland! 

### Reference

1. Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Best Kids' Books Ever," *The New York Times*, July 4, 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/07/05/opinion/05kristof.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/05/opinion/05kristof.html?_r=2) (accessed Sept. 10, 2009).



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**MARY GRACE FLAHERTY**

is in her second year as a doctoral student and IMLS fellow at Syracuse University's iSchool. She has more than twenty years of experience working in a variety of library settings, including academic, health research, and public libraries. Her most recent experience was as director of the Sidney (N.Y.) Memorial Public Library; mgflaher@syr.edu.

Mary Grace is reading *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* by Paul Rabinow, *Essentials of Health Behavior: Social and Behavioral Theory in Public Health* by Mark Edberg, and *Ethnography Step-by-Step* by David M. Fetterman.

# Pangs? Yes. Regrets? No.

While having lunch with a dear friend and former colleague, she asked if I have any regrets about leaving my job as library director to go back to school to pursue a PhD in information science. I told her that no, even though there are many challenges and I'm fifteen to twenty years older than most of the other students in the program, I don't have any regrets. On my drive home I realized that while I may not have any regrets, there are many reasons why I miss being a part of the daily life of a public library.

I miss selecting books and keeping up with the new popular literature and media. I once heard that the best part of working in a public library was that you got to buy books with someone else's money. Even though I rarely had time to read many of the new books or watch the latest DVDs, it was lovely to handle them and read the covers before making them available to our wonderful patrons.

I miss telling exuberant kids that they could talk in a normal tone of voice. We did have a quiet room, but it wasn't near the children's section, so there wasn't much shushing going on. I miss the cinnamon almond cookies (hot from the oven) Mrs. Fish dropped off on a regular basis; the recipe is a secret, so I can't make them for myself.

I miss giving tours of the "new" basement, which was renovated after record floods in 2006 filled it with five feet of water. I miss the early morning hush and orderly book stacks before the doors opened at 9 a.m. I miss hearing the balloon song during storytime. I miss the "What are you reading now?" segment of the monthly staff meetings.

I miss visiting with the mah-jongg ladies who played every Wednesday. I miss chatting about the latest news with the group of retired men who gathered every morning to review *The New York Times*, *Oneonta Daily Star*, and *Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin*. The staff referred to them affectionately as the "breakfast club."

I miss sending out our Booster Books every other month to all of the three- to four-year-olds in the school district. I miss answering questions about the solar panels we installed on our roof. I miss the practical jokes the staff played on me on April Fool's Day.

I miss the seasonal chores (moving the salt boxes to storage, turning off the heat tape on the roof) that reminded me of the cycle of the seasons in our upstate New York home. I miss being the last resort for the tough reference questions, patron complaints, and staff worries.

Mostly I miss being part of something where the whole was much greater than the sum of the parts. In our fortunate circumstance, the library was not only the community center, but the heart and soul of the village. ■





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Jennifer is reading *Girl in a Blue Dress: A Novel Inspired by the Life and Marriage of Charles Dickens* by Gaynor Arnold, *Searching for the Sound: My Life with the Grateful Dead* by Phil Lesh, and *Pope Joan: A Novel* by Donna Woolfolk Cross.

"Tales from the Front" is a collection of news items and innovative ideas from libraries nationwide. Send submissions to the contributing editor.

## JCPL's Culture Pass Program Flying High

The Jefferson County (Colo.) Public Library (JCPL) Culture Pass program continues to expand its partnership with local organizations. JCPL is pleased to announce the recent addition of the Butterfly Pavilion to its list. In addition to the Pavilion, patrons have the opportunity to visit six other museums free of charge: The Wildlife Experience (the library's first Culture Pass partner), the Colorado History Museum, MCA Denver, Denver Firefighters Museum, Denver Museum of Miniatures, Dolls and Toys, and the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum.

Patrons can reserve the pass through the library's website (<http://jefferson.lib.co.us>).

## The Tile Project @ SouthGlenn

The Tile Project is a community art event and fundraiser, benefiting the Arapahoe Library Friends Foundation, which provides funding for Arapahoe Library District programs such as summer reading, writing contests, computer labs, and more.

Tile painting days were held in late August, early September at the new Southglenn Library in Centennial, Colorado. Hundreds of 6" x 6" tiles were available for \$25 each. After the tiles were hand painted, they were kiln fired by Color Me Mine and installed as a

permanent display outside the concierge lobby at the new Streets at SouthGlenn retail center.

For details, visit The Tile Project at [www.southglennlibraryproject.arapahoelibraries.org](http://www.southglennlibraryproject.arapahoelibraries.org) or contact Nicolle Davies at (303) 798-3021 or [ndavies@ald.lib.co.us](mailto:ndavies@ald.lib.co.us).

## It's All About Books @ the Iowa Author Fair

The Iowa Author Fair, hosted by the Iowa Library Association, the Iowa Center for the Book, and the Des Moines Public Library was held in the Central Library on October 21, 2009. More than thirty authors were available to sign books. Children's stories were performed in the children's area in the Central Library. Books were available for sale at two local book stores.

For more information, visit [www.dmpl.org](http://www.dmpl.org).

## Topping Off Ceremony @ Davenport PL

The Eastern Avenue Branch of the Davenport (Iowa) Public Library construction is definitely underway! Bush Construction Company, the general contractor, and its subcontractors are working to get the foundation of the structure in the ground. As the building structure is completed the steelworkers will have a Topping Off ceremony in celebration of the steel structure of the building. The public is invited to sign one of

the steel beams that will be placed in the entrance of the new building.

There were no specific dates or times available at the time of publication.

Check [www.davenportlibrary.com](http://www.davenportlibrary.com) for more "Signing the Beam" information. You may also follow the progress of the project through the Eastern Avenue Branch blog at <http://blogs.davenportlibrary.com/eastern>.

## NYPL's Salomon Room Transformed into New Wireless Reading Room

New York Public Library's (NYPL) Edna Barnes Salomon Room is now the home to a new wireless Internet reading and study room. This striking room now provides seating for 128 users who will have access to work space and free Internet access. While many readers will choose to use their own computers, for the first time in the Fifth Avenue library's history users will also have access to laptops available for free loan from the library.

"The library's reading room has been filled with job seekers, freelancers, students, researchers and many others relying on its services, especially during this time of economic uncertainty," said NYPL President Paul LeClerc. "With the Internet such an important tool for all types of research, this extra capacity will be an important resource for our users."

The 4,500-square-foot room will be able to seat 128 readers and has been upgraded with new furniture and lighting fixtures.

For more information, call (212) 592-7700 or write [jonathan\\_pace@nypl.org](mailto:jonathan_pace@nypl.org).

## Phoenix Public Library Tweets Twilight Contest

Patrons who followed Phoenix Public Library (PPL) on [twitter.com/phxlibrary](http://twitter.com/phxlibrary) could have won one of five *Twilight* prizes. The *Twilight* Twitter Contest started at noon on October 19 and ended at noon on November 19, a day before the much-anticipated release of the *New Moon* movie.

The contest was simple. Five questions were tweeted, one per week for five weeks for a chance to win one of five prizes, provided by the Friends of PPL. Participants e-mailed their answers along with contact information to [lib.contest@phoenix.gov](mailto:lib.contest@phoenix.gov). Entrants who answered a bonus question had their names submitted twice. Winners were selected in a random drawing on November 19 and announced via tweet the same day. Complete contest guidelines can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/yjtxsqy>.

For more information, call (602) 262-4636 or visit [www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org](http://www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org).

## Job Help Day @ your library

Whether it's résumé writing help, access to classifieds, industry and company information,

or acquiring new skills, job hunters have always been able to rely on the free resources of their local library. In today's economy, these resources are more in demand than ever.

To meet this demand, and provide additional support for local job seekers, five Central Ohio libraries—including Worthington Libraries—sponsored a Job Help Day @ your library. The event featured job-related presentations, programs, demonstrations, and expert speakers.

Attendees had their résumés reviewed by experienced career advisors, learned interviewing tips, got help with job search strategies, and learned how people are using blogs, Twitter, and LinkedIn to find jobs.

For more information, visit [www.worthingtonlibraries.org](http://www.worthingtonlibraries.org).

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**NANCI MILONE HILL** is the Head of Readers' Services at the Nevins Memorial Library in Methuen, Mass; [nhill@mvlc.org](mailto:nhill@mvlc.org).

Nanci is reading *While I'm Falling* by Laura Moriarty, *An Echo in the Bone* by Diana Gabaldon, and *Last Voyage of the Valentina* by Santa Montefiore.

"Perspectives" offers varied viewpoints on subjects of interest to the public library profession.

# We Are the Difference

Sometimes things happen in our professional lives that seem ironic. Take for instance the fact that just recently, during the collation for a deceased library trustee, another trustee was commiserating with me about the lack of historical records available regarding our institution's history. What a sad state of affairs it was when a patron cannot go to the public library for historical information about the public library, he commented. Imagine my surprise then, when I opened my e-mail to read the following essay by Bernadette A. Lear where she relates her experience in requesting historical collection information from more than two thousand public libraries across the country.

Lear has spent the last year trying to discern whether or not public libraries in the early 1800s followed the American Library Association's recommendation to include Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in their collections. More than 48 percent of libraries responded to her request for information. While that may seem like a fair number of respondents, Lear questions the lack of response from the remaining libraries she contacted. Just what constitutes good public service? What kind of response are our patrons experiencing from us, and do they walk away unsatisfied, as Lear did?

I encourage you to read on about Lear's experience. Not only was her research (which appeared in the September 2009 issue of *Nineteenth-Century Literature*) fascinating, but her insights into customer service and maintaining our own corporate histories are intriguing as well.

## Libraries, History, and Helping Customers

BERNADETTE A. LEAR ([BALL9@PSU.EDU](mailto:BALL9@PSU.EDU)), BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION LIBRARIAN, PENN STATE HARRISBURG LIBRARY, MIDDLETOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

"My name is Bernadette Lear. I'm a librarian who is pursuing a master of arts degree in American studies. I'm doing a research project on the censorship of Mark Twain's novels . . ."

If this sounds familiar to you, you may have received an e-mail from me in spring 2008. At the time, I was taking a required course for my graduate pro-



gram. One of the first books we read was *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and my ears perked up when one of my classmates mentioned the book had been banned at her child's school. I knew that Twain was a regular feature on the American Library Association's (ALA) "most challenged" book lists, and I began to wonder whether this was always true. After class, I ran across campus to my office. I own a copy of ALA's 1893 *Catalog*, which was an early list of "best books" recommended for library collections. Sure enough, it included *Innocents Abroad*, *Roughing It*, *Tom Sawyer*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, and *Life on the Mississippi*, but not *Huckleberry Finn*. I realized that I had the beginning of a research project—to see whether libraries in the 1800s and early 1900s followed ALA's recommendations about Twain.

Over the course of six months, I e-mailed more than 3,800 libraries across the country, asking each of them to search old library catalogues, accession records, and other primary sources for evidence of whether they had owned any of Twain's books during the 1860s to 1910s. I can't spoil the scoop, but you can find my results in the September 2009 issue of *Nineteenth-Century Literature (NCL)*.<sup>1</sup> Here, I am going to write about things that didn't fit in the *NCL* article, but need to be discussed in our professional circles.

I hadn't been on the "other" side of the reference desk in a long time, so depending on someone else for answers proved difficult and unsettling for me. Few, if any, libraries have digitized their institutional records; thus I relied on librarians' knowledge of (and access to) attics, basements, director's offices, storage closets, vaults, and other places where uncataloged historical materi-

als are often hidden. I also relied on their willingness to search through these sources on my behalf and to send me a reply. The speed and quality of the libraries' responses were never a focus of my research, but as I recovered from so much correspondence and data-crunching, I began to reflect upon what my experience as a library customer reveals about today's profession. To put it mildly, I was both deeply disturbed and also profoundly inspired by the experience.

At first, the libraries' response rate to my questions disappointed me. I was asking what I thought were interesting questions, and ones that each library could uniquely answer—about the contents of its collection. Yet, of more than 3,800 institutions that I e-mailed, just over 1,800 (about 48 percent) replied. In addition to folks who were willing and able to help, this figure includes institutions that said they were unable to provide the level of service I requested or didn't have the records I needed. Some social scientists would think that a 48 percent response is rather good, but the practitioner in me was shocked by the majority (52 percent) that never replied in any fashion. Even among those who did reply, only about a third (or about 16 percent overall) were able to provide answers. This is certainly a lower success ratio than classic studies like Marjorie Murfin's and Charles Bunge's have found.<sup>2</sup>

Thinking about this in my capacity as the current chair of ALA's Library History Round Table (LHRT), I became all the more concerned about libraries that have not kept, or do not provide access to, primary information about their own institutions' histories. Back issues of library annual reports, bulletins, and such are the bread and butter

of LHRT members' research. Unlike other topics, historical information about libraries is not widely available on the Internet. In fact, many library websites that I visited offered plentiful information about historic city halls, schools, railroad stations, parks, and churches without a single blurb about the history of the library itself. Given the hundreds of institutions that told me they had, alas, discarded their old publications and records, I think we may be too willing, when space becomes tight, to consign our own "junk" to the dustbin. This tendency may be borne of bend-over-backwards customer service, a failure to see our own stories as interesting, or a desire to revamp our image into that of an infotainment hot spot. Regardless of the cause, current and future researchers (including newbie employees trying to get the skinny on "why we do things that way") may not have resources to shed light on the history of our profession.

Perhaps more important, the lack of response to my queries seems to have grave implications for reference service—especially for customers relying on electronic communication. In the course of my project, I carefully verified e-mail addresses through the libraries' websites, as well as through the *American Library Directory* and state directories of libraries. Thus, bad links shouldn't have been a big problem. So why didn't two thousand libraries reply to me? We certainly couldn't get away with closing our doors 52 percent of the time.

My experience was one of dual-conscience. The harried practitioner inside me could easily identify with all the possible reasons for deprioritizing or flubbing a request, especially when I remembered my own previous employment in a busy

public library, and how the run-up to our summer reading program consumed us from March through September. Yet the fact that the majority of librarians did so in my case was a call back to the patron's reality. I was forced to imagine the doubts unacknowledged queries could leave with customers: Did librarians delete my message, thinking it was a prank or spam? Did it get lost in the shuffle somehow? Was it something I said? Did I seem too demanding? Did I put the librarians out, by asking for help? Did they assume that I would get answers from someone else? Did they think I was lazy, because I asked my question through e-mail? Do I have a scarlet A (academic) or a scarlet O (out-of-town) pinned to my shirt? Was it because I can't afford to pay for service? Did the librarians figure that I needed less assistance, because of my educational background? Did they think my question was just a stupid waste of time? The customer inside of me felt dejected—and angry. Regardless of the philosophical and political issues, short staffing, or technological glitches that might be at work, it's unacceptable not to receive a single word from the majority of America's libraries. If we reference librarians can't answer research questions—the type that so many of us supposedly miss these days—what are we here for?

Luckily, my experiences also revealed a path out of this frustration. Although two thousand of the libraries that I contacted never replied to me, many of the 48 percent who did made herculean efforts. They showed attention to detail, empathy, intellectual curiosity, and tenacity we should all emulate. Such qualities were

evident in all kinds of institutions, large and small. One woman in New Hampshire, working in a library that had no heat or light in its attic, donned a parka in the early morning hours to find the old records that are stored there. A fellow in New Jersey found the item I had asked for, and threw in information from another library's catalog (one I didn't know about), just in case I might want it. One woman in Connecticut spied an old catalog locked in an exhibit case. The key had been lost long ago. Undeterred, she ordered the town's maintenance workers to break it open. Another gal in Illinois couldn't find the information I wanted at her institution, so she drove to a nearby university to consult resources in its special collections. Several library directors who didn't have the time to do the research themselves brought ledgers home to teenage kids or retired spouses. Another harried woman first asked if I was a "real person." When I confirmed the fact, she grumbled that I would "owe her big time" but got back to me in a couple of weeks with some information. The staff and students at Brown, Columbia, and Cornell University libraries; the New York Public Library; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and the University of Wisconsin-Madison loaned or scanned dozens of items. Many libraries that did not have the ability to digitize sent handwritten notes or photocopies instead. Quite a few people worked on my requests during lunch breaks, at home, over weekends—far beyond the requirements of their everyday jobs.

More than a full year has passed, and the only conclusion I can make is that *we* are the difference. Serving our customers is not really about collections, facilities, staffing, or

technology. In my experience, the crucial variation between those who replied and those who didn't is the intellectual curiosity to seek answers, and the sheer determination to help. Among those who responded, these two factors trumped every challenge. One lesson to draw from this is that we may operate within limits, but within them we have the opportunity to make important choices. We can decide whether to value history and cultural endeavors—in other words, to keep old documents, to promote our libraries' histories, and to assist researchers who want to understand our profession. We can also choose to be attentive to every detail, to create environments that enable opportunities for success, to mobilize whatever resources we have, to have an outlook that sees beyond immediate needs, to be tenacious in hunting down facts, and to take advantage of the luck of finding a spare moment in a hectic day. Or we can decide not to.

During an economic crisis that is the worst some of us have ever known, our own efficacy within these times is important to remember. Choices are empowering. We must hold on to them, and choose to be the difference in our customers' lives. ■

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# 2008 Medals

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The National Medal for Museum and Library Service is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that make their communities better places to live. The Institute of Museum and Library Services and its Board are proud to congratulate the 2008 winners:



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**Skidompha Public Library**  
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**Skokie Public Library**  
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Denise is reading *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith and *Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research* by Vincent A. Anfara and Norma T. Mertz.

This occasional column will focus on topical issues related to public library research and statistics. What do you need to know? Send ideas for topics to Kathleen Hughes, Editor of *Public Libraries*, at khughes@ala.org.

# Retirement Trends in U.S. Public Libraries

## Impacts of an Economic Downturn

The American Library Association (ALA) Office for Research and Statistics has conducted periodic analysis of retention and retirement trends of library workers in the United States. In 2002, Stephen Tordella conducted analysis of decennial census data to begin estimating retirement trends for public, school, and academic libraries. Those analyses were published as “Retirement & Recruitment: A Deeper Look.”<sup>1</sup> In 2004, the applied estimates from this study were updated to include *master of library and information science* (MLIS) graduation figures to understand potential shortfalls on the supply side of the library workforce and were published as “Library Retirements—What We Can Expect.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2006, Tordella and Tom Godfrey undertook extensive census data analysis for ALA to prepare demographic distributions of the library workforce. Those findings, along with employment figures reported by libraries through national surveys, were published as “Diversity Counts.”<sup>3</sup>

In 2008–09, Tordella and Godfrey conducted analysis using the Census American Communities Survey data and compared it with ALA membership. Those preliminary findings appear in an Annual Conference 2009 ALA Executive Board document, “Librarian Retirements and ALA Membership Study.”<sup>4</sup>

Other key research on retention and retirement trends of library workers include that done by James M. Matarazzo and Joseph J. Mika,<sup>5</sup> which looked at library education, and the extensive research recently completed by José-Marie Griffiths and Donald W. King,<sup>6</sup> which investigated workforce patterns

and projections in public, academic, and special libraries. Finally, research recently released by Joanne Gard Marshall details career patterns of library and information science (LIS) graduates in North Carolina.<sup>7</sup>

This column will review key findings from these studies and discuss challenges of estimating the impact of the economic downturn on the library workforce.

Assumptions about the library workforce include:

1. Librarians enter the workforce at about age 35.
2. Librarians retire at age 65.
3. Male and female librarians retire at about the same age.
4. Younger people aren't entering the workforce in sufficient numbers.
5. The MLIS graduation rates are keeping pace with staff vacancies.

(1. sort of true; 2. false; 3. false; 4. sort of true; 5. don't know)

## When Do Librarians Enter the Workforce?

Three decades of census data has held that the average age of librarians was 45, and that more enter the workforce around age 35 (e.g., have earned an MLIS degree and are working in a position requiring an MLIS degree). Recent research by Griffiths and King indicates that the age an MLIS degree is earned by public librarians distributes as follows:

Under age 25 = 27.3 percent  
 Age 25 to 29 = 27.7 percent  
 Age 30 to 34 = 16.4 percent  
 Age 35+ = 28.6 percent

Further, just more than 74 percent of graduates reported being

employed within one year of earning their degree. With 71 percent reporting earning the MLIS before age 34 and about 74 percent securing employment as librarians within one year, it suggests that there are ample opportunities for MLIS graduates to find employment.

Census data suggests that librarians in all types of libraries continue to enter the workforce well into the 45 to 54 age range. However, Griffiths and King found that male public library workers were more likely to move in and out of the profession than women and were more likely to leave the occupation because of other opportunities. Women were more likely to move in and out of the profession due to family obligations. Of all those who left the workforce in the year of the study (2007), slightly more than 45 percent reported retirement as the reason.

Marshall's 2008 study of MLIS graduates in North Carolina found the median age of LIS graduates to be 32.7 years, and the median age of working graduates to be 50 years. About 25 percent of respondents indicated they would continue working after age 62, and about 8 percent indicated they would continue working beyond age 65. About 23 percent planned to retire on time—by age 65. Respondents indicated the following when asked about leaving full-time employment:

- By 2013, 49 percent of those aged 62 or older indicated they expected to have left the workforce—this is about 12 percent of library workers.
- By 2018, 63 percent of those aged 62 or older indicated they expected to have left the workforce—this is about 23 percent of library workers.

These retirement estimates, and the potential shortage of MLIS graduates, is reinforced in the table 1, which estimates simple supply-demand trends.

Note the 10 percent difference for age 65 and over between anticipated and reported retirements. Although there are no significant gender differences in anticipated retirement ages, men are more likely to retire earlier than women (reported retirement age in 2007), by about 13 percent in the 51 to 55 age range, and about 6 percent in the 56 to 60 age range. This may be explained by women leaving the workforce for family obligations, leading to longer employment by age (not necessarily years of employment), but Griffiths and King present several reported reasons for moving in and out of the workforce. Of all library workers retiring between ages 56 and 65, about 57 percent reported returning to work after retirement.

Early analysis by Tordella and Godfrey indicates later retirement ages than those reported by King and Griffiths. One question to consider is if you had asked those with reported retirement ages about their anticipated retirement age before their retirement, what would they have said? Changes in anticipated and actual retirements certainly would be influenced by the economic downturn and one's ability to retire with adequate income. Returning to work after retirement is another caveat, especially regarding its impact on new MLIS graduates to find full-time employment with benefits. Griffiths and King said:

When one returns to work after retiring, their work status often changes and salaries or wages change. In fact, 64.3 percent of those who retired returned as part-time employees (compared



with 11.7 percent of those who have yet to retire) and 15 percent are considered temporary employees (versus 1.5 percent for others). The retiree average salaries are about two-thirds of others, although hourly wages are about the same (\$20.20 for retirees versus \$18.60 per hour).<sup>8</sup>

### Implications of Returning to the Workforce after Retirement

Matarazzo and Mika suggest in their research that the MLIS graduate pool is not keeping pace with demand, nor does reentry after retirement help new librarians or adequately address the supply-demand gap. Although they report a decline in MLIS graduation rates, it is not demonstrated in the U.S. Department of Education figures presented in table 2.

The hypothesis for the comparison in the table is that MLIS degreed individuals enter the library workforce at age 35 and retire at age 65. "Aging" graduates (e.g., estimating when they would reach age 65) and deducting graduates (column three) from the reported workforce in a fiscal year (column one) makes it pos-

sible to loosely estimate the shortage or excess of MLIS graduates in a particular retirement year (column seven). The table includes public and academic librarians, and has been updated to include graduation figures through 2005–06.

A projected retirement surge between 2010–19 (baby-boomer librarians reaching age 65) suggests that MLIS graduates available for entry into the workforce will be insufficient to support demand until 2019–20. Complicating developing reliable estimates of supply and demand and the economic decline beginning in 2008 are library workers in the public library sector returning to part-time positions.<sup>9</sup> Determining the validity of these estimates during the next ten years is unclear, and more time is needed to understand the impact of the economy on worker retention and retirement patterns by age.

What has not been projected in table 1 is employment growth. What we know from the staffing data reported by academic and public libraries is that librarian positions have remained fairly stable for academic librarians (growing by about .004 percent annually) and public librarian positions have grown by about 2 percent annually since 1980.

### Methods for "Aging" Library Workers

In a project for ALA, Tordella and Godfrey have developed "aging" or "cohort survival" models for library workers based on employment patterns reported in census data covering three periods from 1980 to 2005. The chart in figure 1 presents forecasts of the number of credentialed librarians in 2015 by age based on accession and retirement patterns during those three historic intervals. A baby-boomer impact is clearly evident in the actual 2005 data, but librarian age distributions will change substantially by 2015. All three scenarios for boomer retirement suggest a shift of librarian age distributions toward the younger cohorts. However, even before the recent downturn, librarians had begun delaying retirement. The 1995 to 2005–based scenario shows the greatest number of librarians holding on after traditional retirement ages, and this may be exacerbated by the economic downturn. The early retirement pattern for librarians peaked in the 1980s and first half of the 1990s in their analysis.

It should be noted that "retirement" in this cohort survival model is a net loss of librarians in the workforce. If a librarian "retires,"

**Table 1.** Retirement Age Ranges (Actual or Anticipated) Reported by Griffiths and King

Age	Anticipated Retirement Age (percent)	Reported Retirement Age (percent)
40 to 50	1.2	2.5
51 to 55	6.6	12.8
56 to 60	17.8	24.6
61 to 65	44.5	40.9
Over 65	29.9	19.2





but still works part time, that person would still be part of the workforce in this model. Tordella and Godfrey have found that although part-time

work increases for each five-year age group starting at age 55, the percent of older workers working part time has dropped steadily during their

25-year study period. Therefore, not only are librarians holding on longer, but also progressively more of them are working full time.

**Table 2.** U.S. MLIS Program Graduation Rates and Estimated Retirements

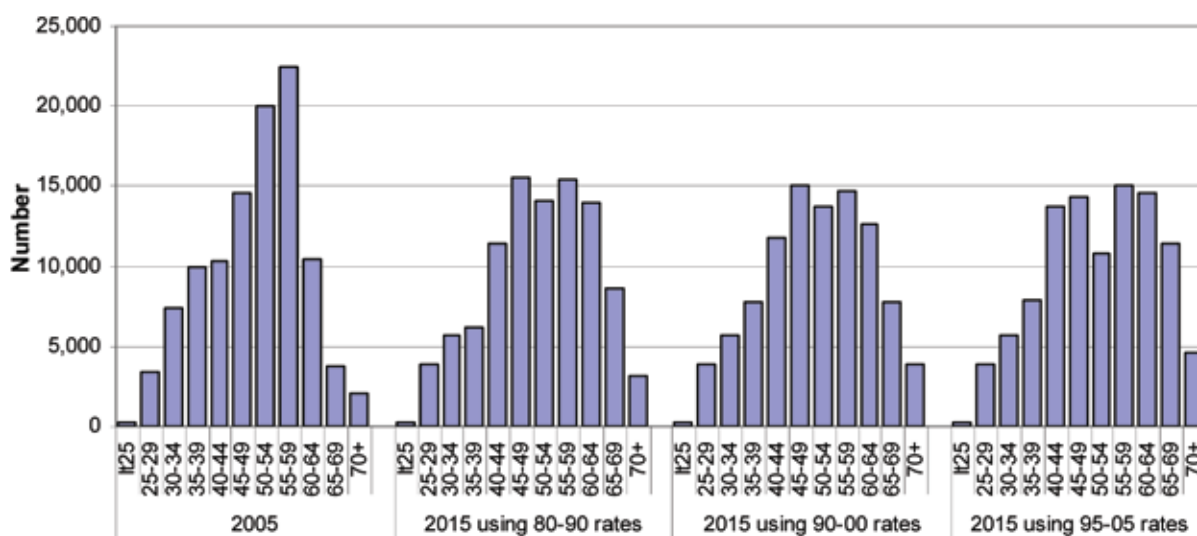
Fiscal Year	Academic and Public Library MLIS Positions	USDE (All Master's Degrees, Library)	Graduation Net Change	Estimated Retirement Year	Estimated Retirement	Graduation Retirement Gap (all MLIS)
1980–81	61,536	4,859	—	2010–11	4,642	217
1985–86	—	3,564	-1,295	2015–16	5,003	-1,439
1986–87	—	3,783	219	2016–17	5,003	-1,220
1987–88	—	3,674	-109	2017–18	5,003	-1,329
1988–89	—	3,906	232	2018–19	5,003	-1,097
1989–90	59,269	4,341	435	2019–20	2,880	1,461
1990–91	60,423	4,763	422	2020–21	2,880	1,883
1991–92	60,827	4,893	130	2021–22	2,880	2,013
1992–93	—	4,871	-22	2022–23	2,880	1,991
1993–94	64,079	5,116	245	2023–24	2,880	2,236
1994–95	—	5,057	-59	2024–25	1,735	3,322
1995–96	65,962	5,099	42	2026–27	1,735	3,364
1996–97	—	4,982	-117	2028–29	1,735	3,247
1997–98	70,201	4,871	-111	2029–30	1,735	3,136
1998–99	—	4,752	-119	2030–31	1,303	3,449
1999–00	72,788	4,577	-175	2031–32	1,303	3,274
2000–01	—	4,727	150	2032–33	1,303	3,424
2001–02	70,085	5,113	386	2033–34	1,303	3,810
2002–03	—	5,295	182	2034–35	1,109	4,186
2003–04	70,973	6,015	720	2035–36	1,109	4,906
2004–05	—	6,213	198	2036–37	1,109	5,104
2005–06	72,654	6,448	235	2037–38	1,109	5,339

MLIS positions as reported by National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Academic Library Surveys and IMLS Public Library Surveys (formerly collected by NCES). Academic data reported biennially. NCES did not report staffing data between 1983 and 1988.

1980–2006 graduation data are actuals, [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07\\_262.asp?referrer=list](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07_262.asp?referrer=list) (accessed Oct. 7, 2009).

Retirement estimates are based on the five-year census estimates divided evenly for the period, and comparison assumes graduation age of 35 years.

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**Figure 1.** Number of Credentialed Librarians 2005 and 2015 Projected Using Rates from Three Past Time Periods

## Conclusion

So, what does all this tell us? Demand for LIS graduates continues, the library workforce is aging but working longer, and retirement estimates align pretty well across at least four independent projects. The impact of the economic downturn on library employment opportunities or the timing of retirements is unclear. Recognizing that library workers, like those in other career sectors, want to work beyond a traditional retirement age, may be more of a factor in accurately projecting when individuals truly exit the profession than any other variable. If we only had a crystal ball. ■

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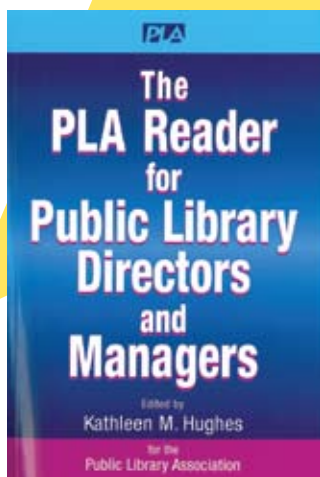
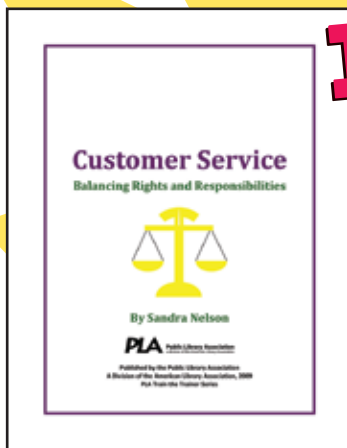
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# Call to Action

## An Interview with Nicholas D. Kristof

**N***ew York Times* journalist Nicholas D. Kristof has twice won the Pulitzer Prize: the first was shared with his wife Sheryl WuDunn for their coverage of China's Tiananmen Square democracy movement, and the second was awarded for his 2006 coverage of the genocide in Darfur. For the past twenty years, he has traveled the world, and has recently focused his attention on women's issues in developing countries. Kristof is an advocate of new media, maintaining a blog (<http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com>), a YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/user/NicholasKristof](http://www.youtube.com/user/NicholasKristof)), and Facebook and Twitter pages. Kristof and WuDunn are also authors of *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power* and *Thunder from the East: Portrait of a Rising Asia*. Their current book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, was published in September 2009 and has already appeared on the *The New York Times* Bestseller list. He spoke to *Public Libraries* via e-mail on September 20, 2009.

***Public Libraries:*** How did you come to cover women's issues in developing countries?

**Nicholas D. Kristof:** One epiphany came when I happened to report on sex trafficking in Asia. I was just blown away by what I found: thirteen-year-old girls systematically kidnapped in rural areas and sold into brothels where they were imprisoned, beaten, and never paid. It struck me that the main difference with nineteenth-century slavery was that these girls were all going to be dead of AIDS by their twenties. Then increasingly I came to see that so many of the most egregious human rights violations in the world involved the systematic abuse of women and girls. At roughly the same time, given my deep interest in global poverty, I came to see that the most effective ways to defeat poverty and extremism were to educate girls and bring women into the formal labor force.

**PL:** How has your approach and outlook on these issues changed during your tenure as a reporter?

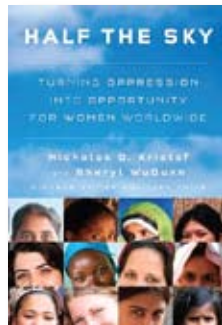
### DON'T MISS KRISTOF AT PLA 2010!

Nicholas D. Kristof will present the opening session keynote address of the Public Library Association's 13th National Conference in Portland, Oregon, on Wednesday, March 24, from 2:30 to 4 p.m. More information is available at [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org).

**NK:** I've certainly come to appreciate over time that it's harder to help people than it looks. Lots of aid projects fail, and going into a country with a megaphone to tell people what to do won't work. But I think we're also learning what kinds of aid do work. For example, among the most cost-effective ways of getting more kids in school is to deworm them—that makes them better nourished, less anemic, and less likely to miss school from sickness. Other great ways to help girls are to iodize salt, or to bribe parents to send them to school. Who would have thought that? I'm a great believer in empiricism and practical experiments to see what works and what is cost-effective, and we're making great strides in understanding how to make aid more effective—often through empowering women and girls.

**PL:** You write in *Half the Sky* about how readers are spurred to action by the story of one individual rather than a listing of statistics. Can you talk about the methods you use when writing a story? How do you decide what you want to write your column about and how do you arrive at the finished product? Out of all the people you meet and interview, how are you able to select just one?

**NK:** I'm very influenced by the work of Paul Slovic and other social psychologists, who have given us insights into what creates empathy. To oversimplify, it helps to tell stories about individuals and to focus on hopeful or inspiring narratives rather than depressing ones. I do indeed try to use these ideas in shaping my columns, and my wife and I also used them in selecting the stories for *Half the Sky*. We were quite proud that we managed to write a happy and inspiring book about sex trafficking



**Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn.**

a way to take a student with me on a reporting trip to Darfur. I figured the contest would create some nice buzz, and then the winner would write about what he saw and would create interest among young people. The *New York Times* lawyers weren't impressed by the genius of the idea of taking a student into a war zone, however. So I reconceived it as a contest to take a student with me on a reporting trip to Africa, to look at issues around global poverty. It's been a terrific experience, for me and the winner, and a nice way to focus a bit more attention on global issues.

**PL:** You've been at the forefront of new media, keeping both a blog and a YouTube channel. How did you decide to use these outlets? What are you able to achieve reporting a story through these outlets rather than in your column?

**NK:** There's always a perception that any *New York Times* columnist must be incredibly arrogant, and so the blog is a useful way of responding to readers and maybe chip away at that

and maternal mortality!

**PL:** You've hosted a very popular "Win a Trip with Nick Kristof" contest the past few years. How did that come about and what has your experience with it been?

**NK:** Originally, I conceived of the contest as

perception a little bit. The same goes for my Twitter and Facebook entries. Perhaps because my columns tend to be about very serious topics, readers tend to think I'm utterly humorless, and about 110 years old, and I think they're often pleasantly surprised that my tone in Facebook and tweets is much more casual and funny.

**PL:** A major theme in *Half the Sky* is the need for education (particularly the education of girls) in developing countries. What can our readers in their roles as librarians do to help? Also, what advice would you give to a reader of your book if he or she wants to do something more to tackle these issues?

**NK:** Our aim truly is not just to inform people, but also to galvanize them to action. In the back of the book, we have a list of organizations that are active in this space, and throughout the book we have examples of people who have gotten involved in various ways. There's no one way to get active. For some, it'll be writing checks, for others it'll be going off for a couple of months to teach English to the brothel children at the New Light shelter in Calcutta. We're hoping that book clubs will also morph into take-action clubs and work together on some of these issues. We've also formed a website ([www.halfttheskymovement.org](http://www.halfttheskymovement.org)) with resources to get people engaged.

**PL:** What is your plan for *Half the Sky*? Will it be a book you and Sheryl revisit and update? What is your hope for the book?

**NK:** The website is part of the ongoing effort, and there are also plans for a *Half the Sky* documentary, a TV special, and an online social networking game. It feels as if there is




an incipient movement building on this issue, and we hope the book can help us reach a tipping point.

**PL:** A documentary, *The Reporter*, was made about your 2007 trip to the Congo. How did that come about and what was the experience like?

**NK:** A film company asked if it could accompany me on my 2007 win-a-trip journey. I agreed, because I

wanted more attention focused on these issues. Frankly, it was a hassle at the time to have three extra people coming along, and there were times I was ready to hand them over to a warlord. But I'm so happy with the documentary they did, and I think it advances the goal of getting people to pay attention to the Congo.

**PL:** Finally, what roles have public libraries played in your life?

**NK:** As a child, especially, I lived in our local public libraries. I was a prodigious reader and knew all the children's librarians very well—and they helped run interference when as a fourth- and fifth-grader I began to rent adult books and the adult librarians were suspicious. A huge portion of my childhood was spent reading and rereading the Freddy the Pig series, to the point that in my next life I may come back as a hog. 

### Barbara A. Macikas Named PLA Executive Director

Barbara A. Macikas has been named executive director of the Public Library Association (PLA). Macikas, who was chosen from a nationwide pool of candidates, assumed her responsibilities at PLA on Nov. 23, 2009.

Macikas brings extensive association management experience to the position. She served as executive director of the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) and the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), divisions of the American Library Association (ALA), from May 2007 to May 2009. In that position, she worked with the boards of directors of both divisions, managed two budgets, directed all day-to-day operations, and facilitated the work of volunteers in both divisions. She left this position to focus on association management projects and consulting.


Prior to assuming leadership of ASCLA and RUSA, Macikas served as deputy executive director of PLA from 2000 to 2007. In that position, she directed major programs such as the national conference and membership marketing and new initiatives in such diverse areas as preschool literacy, public library advocacy, and recruitment to the profession. She also was responsible for fundraising via the PLA Partners Program. Before assuming the deputy executive director position, she served as conference manager for PLA from 1997 to 2000.

"The pace of change and the economy we face today present public libraries and associations with serious challenges but also with opportunities for meaningful change. PLA has a rich tradition of leadership, innovation, and responsiveness and I am absolutely delighted and very honored to be rejoining my colleagues at PLA and ALA to continue that tradition, and to once again have the opportunity to work together for public libraries," said Macikas.

Before joining the PLA staff, she worked as a consultant managing trade shows, conferences, and special events for the Illinois Library Association, the American College of Sports Medicine, and for ALA's Executive, Development, and International Relations offices.

In addition to her active career, she was elected trustee of the Homewood (Ill.) Public Library District, serving as president in 2008–09, and has served as a volunteer for her local school district's Learning Resource Center. She is a graduate of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, majoring in political science.

"On behalf of the PLA Executive Director Search Committee and the PLA Board of Directors, let me express how pleased we are to welcome Barb Macikas back to PLA," said PLA President Sari Feldman. "She brings to the job a history of excellence and innovation and a valuable combination of experience in association management and libraries that will ensure the continued success of PLA."

Search committee members included: Sari Feldman (president, PLA), Carol Sheffer (immediate past president, PLA), Clara Bohrer (past president, PLA), Mary Ellen Davis (executive director, ACRL), Michael Jeffers (editor, ALA Editions), Miguel Figueroa (director, Office for Diversity), Cynthia Vivian (director, ALA Human Resources), and Mary Ghikas (senior associate executive director, ALA). 



**MICHAEL PORTER** is Communications Manager at Webjunction.org; michael.libraryman@gmail.com. Michael is reading *The Accidental Library Marketer* by Kathy Dempsey.

**DAVID LEE KING** is Digital Branch and Services Manager, Topeka & Shawnee County (Kans.) Public Library; davidlee.king@gmail.com; www.davidleeking.com; Twitter/Skype: davidleeking. David is also reading *The Accidental Library Marketer* by Kathy Dempsey.

If you have feedback about this article, would like to suggest a topic for future Internet Spotlight articles, have an interesting Internet resource to share, or if you just want to say hello, please feel free to e-mail the editors.

"Internet Spotlight" explores Internet and Web topics relevant to librarians in the public library sector. Your input is welcome.

# Dealing with Comments on Your Website

In the last ten years or so, there's been a bit of a revolution on the Web. Yeah, yeah, we all know that. But this time we are talking about the sometimes loved, occasionally dreaded comment box.

Ten years ago, could you easily leave a comment at a website? Could you share your thoughts instantly? No, probably not. The old way to leave your thoughts was simple enough, yet sometimes excruciatingly painful. First, you had to locate the website author's e-mail address (if it was listed somewhere on the website), and then you could write to that person (and hope you got an answer).

That worked fine for quick question-and-answer messages. But what if you wanted to hold a more public discussion about that article or webpage? Could you? Technically, yes, if you frequented USENET newsgroups or some other appropriately geeky Web tool.

Thankfully, Web 2.0 services—especially the comment box—have made commenting on websites both easy and public. Both of our blogs, for instance, allow instant commenting. Our Flickr, YouTube, and Facebook accounts allow some form of instant comments, too. Twitter? It's all about the instant, public comment. Both of our organizations' websites also allow commenting in a variety of formats.

But what happens when comments get out of hand? Whether the comment is on a website/blog, Twitter account, Facebook page, profile, or elsewhere, we've got to be on our toes. Because sometimes, comments and responses can get very interesting, very quickly with all these new Web tools.

To exemplify this, let's look at something David recently experienced with comments on his library's website ([www.tscpl.org](http://www.tscpl.org)). This situation has helped his library nail down commenting guidelines for patrons, and helped them remember to always be vigilant when it comes to comments.

First, a bit of backstory: Topeka and Shawnee County (Kans.) Public Library (TSCPL) plans to start charging late fees. TSCPL hasn't had a late fee for about thirty-five years, so it's a bit of a big deal in Topeka at the moment. TSCPL is starting to share its fees and fines plan with the community, and

one obvious place to share has been on the library's website. The marketing director wrote a post to TSCPL's Library News blog, which was made "sticky" so it wouldn't disappear from the top of the screen for a few weeks.

Guess what? The local community commented on that post. So far, it has gathered a whopping 119 comments. Comments were left by more than thirty people, mostly customers (and about seven library staff who chimed in as well). One customer left more than fourteen comments! So, it's been a rather hot blog post for the library. As you might imagine, not all of these comments have been positive, shining examples of library love. Some commenters support the library's plan and some don't. And, a few commenters even added in some personal jabs directed at specific staff members.

How has TSCPL dealt with these comments? Here's a rundown of what normally happens with comments left on the library's website:

- The blog author (i.e., library staff member) gets an e-mail when a comment is added to their post, and they respond appropriately to the comment.
- Once in awhile, the comment is handed to appropriate staff to answer.
- Staff actively monitors all comments to their posts.
- When there's a misperception or misinformation being shared, it is corrected.
- If there's a personal attack, an e-mail is sent, reminding individuals that they're welcome to post, but to please stick to the topic, and to steer clear of personal attacks. Then a comment is also posted on that blog post stating the same thing. The goal

here is transparency.

- If there's a comment that's highly inappropriate, it gets deleted.
- Obvious spam comments are deleted.

Why didn't TSCPL simply close comments when they started getting ugly? Because the library is in control of the conversation. Think about it. If people were talking about this issue on their own blogs, the library might not be able to respond. If people are discussing TSCPL in the local newspaper's editorial section (which they have been), the library is not in control of that conversation either—the newspaper is.

But when the conversation happens on the library's website, then it's in complete control. TSCPL staff can easily correct misinformation and point to the correct answer. They can talk amongst themselves, craft an appropriate response, and then give a complete answer—not one that's edited down for length.

Other organizations handle comment moderation differently. Over at Flickr, for example, they sometimes send a warning about closing the whole conversation, rather than just blocking one person from the conversation. That has certain interesting implications. They're not pointing out individual problems—instead, they're taking the conversation as a whole to the group, and asking them *all* to simmer down. In effect, they're asking the interested people that are commenting to self-police. And if that doesn't work, they simply turn that conversation off.

Okay, so what are a library's options with comments? There are basically three:

1. **Don't allow comments.** Seems silly to say in an article about comments, but it *is* an option.

Why would you want to do this? Sometimes you're forced to. Some city attorneys don't like comments. To them, it seems like "publishing" public comments. So they sometimes ask the city library to turn off comments. **The downside:** You're blocking patrons from asking questions and interacting with you.

2. **Moderate comments.** This is a good option for many libraries, especially if you're new to emerging Web trends. Comment moderation works like this: when a comment is added to your website, instead of publishing it automatically, the comment is e-mailed to a designated staff member. That person reads the comment and decides whether or not to post the comment. **The downside:** If you moderate comments, you need to do it fast. That same afternoon, if not sooner. Why? A comment is the start of a conversation—maybe a question expecting a response or thoughts on a recent event. If you don't get to the comment for a day or two, you have essentially killed that conversation. You wouldn't kill the conversation inside your physical library, would you? Don't do it online, either.

3. **Allow unmoderated comments.** Simply allow all comments, come what may. Will this cause bad things to happen? No, not really. The TSCPL conversation mentioned previously would have happened with moderated comments, too. Plus, it gives patrons an added sense of satisfaction to see their comment published instantly on your website. **The downside:** Whatever is said appears on



your website. If they didn't like something you did, it's on your website. Is that a bad thing? I think not. You have a chance to apologize publicly or to correct bad info (and get some pretty instant feedback from patrons).

## Community Discussion Guidelines

Here are some guidelines (based on guidelines used on National Public Radio's website at [www.npr.org/help/discussionrules.html](http://www.npr.org/help/discussionrules.html)) to posting comments and content at TSCPL's digital branch.

### We Encourage Comments

- **We want to hear from you!** Please post comments, questions, and other thoughts as you think them. That's what we're here for.
- **Stay on Topic.** Stick to the subject and issues raised by the post, not to the person who made them.
- **Think before you press the publish button.** Remember that this is a public forum, and your words will be archived on this site and available for anyone to find for a long time—the Web has a very long memory.
- **If you can't be polite, don't say it.** Respect is the name of the game. You must respect your fellow commenters.

### Some Don'ts

- Don't post copyrighted materials (articles, videos, audio, etc.) that

you do not have permission to reproduce or distribute.

- Don't post content that installs viruses, worms, malware, trojans, and so on.
- Don't post content that is obscene, libelous, or defamatory or hateful.
- Don't post spam.
- Don't post personal, real-life information such as home addresses and home phone numbers.

### What Will We Do?


- We'll respond to comments, answer questions, and provide suggestions as appropriate.
- Sometimes we'll join a comment thread or talk board topic to help focus (or refocus) the discussion, or to get people talking.
- If you break one of the guidelines above (or come close to it), we'll e-mail you and ask you to stop. We might also post a reminder to the discussion. If it continues, we will delete your comments and block you from posting.
- We will remove any posts that are obviously commercial or otherwise spam-like.
- We will remove content that puts us in legal jeopardy, such as potentially libelous or defamatory postings, or material posted in potential breach of copyright.

And while we're talking about these guidelines in the context of a library website that has comments enabled, these guidelines can be eas-

ily applied to other online scenarios that we are, should be, or will be dealing with in the years to come.

For instance, what if your library has a Facebook page where you can gain fans, message them, and post events and conversations? Well, you are going to need to check in on that page regularly and apply variations of the suggestions listed here if things get sticky. The same applies to "@" replies you might get on your library's Twitter account.

Flickr is another good example to ponder here using the previous suggestions. If your library has posted photos on Flickr to share, promote, and deepen community connections, you'll occasionally have to do more than just soak up the glory of all those "nice picture!" and "I love storytime at the library!" comments. Hopefully the information in this column will help you think about and plan for these situations, too.

We all know that ordinarily we won't have a fuss to deal with when it comes to online comments and responses to our work. But just as we plan and prepare to deal with face-to-face situations, taking some time to think about how we have reacted to—and will react to—online comment issues can be extremely useful. Hopefully this column gave you some useful suggestions and some food for thought for when online comments get bumpy for you and your library. 



Contributing Editor **LEE**

**PRICE** is the Director of Development at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia. In that position, and in his previous work as a fundraising consultant, he has helped to raise millions of dollars for a wide variety of cultural organizations, including many libraries and archives. Please direct all correspondence about the column to him at [leeaprice@comcast.net](mailto:leeaprice@comcast.net).

Lee is reading *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy (translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky) and *The Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World 2010* by Bob Sehlinger with Len Testa.

“Bringing in the Money” presents fundraising strategies for public libraries. Many librarians are turning to alternative funding sources to supplement shrinking budgets. Fundraising efforts not only boost finances, but also leverage community support and build collaborative strategies.

# The Highest Honor

*“We here in Hoopa know every day that we make a difference in the lives of the people; we see our work in the smiles of patrons, and the students who show us that their papers received a good grade thanks to reference help we have provided, and in the joy expressed by a child who has learned to read in our Summer Reading Club. To have folks from outside of this small rural place acknowledge that what we do here is important, and support us with generous gifts and offers to assist with programs, has been an amazing and a most wonderful piece of our receiving a National Medal for Library Service.”—Kristin A. Freeman, manager, Hoopa Branch/Kim Yerton Memorial Library, Humboldt County (Calif.) Library System<sup>1</sup>*

Each year, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awards the National Medal for Museum and Library Service to five museums and five libraries that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities. These medals honor vision, innovation, and quality achievement. They are arguably the most prestigious honor that an American public library can receive.

The national awards program started back in 1994, but the awards were only for museums at that time, as this was before the federal program for aid to libraries was folded into the Institute of Museum Services. The newly combined IMLS was formed in 1996 and in 2000 the annual awards were expanded to honor both museums and libraries (including special, academic, and public libraries). The “award” was changed to a “medal” in 2007.

With this program, IMLS has been remarkably successful in looking beyond the big city libraries to locate and celebrate innovative work at smaller library systems and even individual libraries. Of course, a number of important city libraries have deservedly received these medals. In just the past three years, large-city recipients have included the Miami-Dade (Fla.) Public Library System, the Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library, the Memphis (Tenn.) Public Library and Information Center, and the San Antonio (Tex.) Public Library. They deserve congratulations for their extraordinary accomplishments.

But, for me, it's the small library honorees that really inspire the imagination. They are a welcome reminder of the dedicated work that occurs

daily in libraries throughout the United States—work that rarely gets acknowledged on anything but a local level. The medal offers an opportunity for a small yet exemplary library to take a well-deserved bow on a national stage.

## The Application Process

The 2010 nominations for the National Medal are due February 16, 2010. As with all government grants, late applications will not be accepted.

Technically, IMLS utilizes a nomination—and not an application—process for the National Medal. Nevertheless, the process really doesn't significantly differ from any one of dozens of other federal application processes, and the libraries that have received the National Medal have been those that treated it like a traditional application. In other words, the library staff approached the process prepared to invest significant time and resources.

At first glance, it may appear that any patron or interested member of the community may spontaneously submit a nomination expounding the unique glories of your library. Not only is this unlikely, it's probably impossible given the number of in-house documents that must accompany the official nomination. If you want your library to be considered, your library staff must be willing to commit to the process.

Information on the application can be found at the IMLS website ([www.imls.gov/about/medals.shtm](http://www.imls.gov/about/medals.shtm)). From there, you can download the nomination form and review the required attachments. A complete application will include a five-page, single-spaced narrative; financial statements for the past two fiscal years; and up to three letters of sup-

port. These nominating materials are ultimately reviewed by members of the National Museum and Library Services Board, a presidentially appointed policy advisory board of IMLS. Based on their recommendations, the IMLS director selects the final winners.

According to Mamie Bittner, IMLS deputy director of the Office of Policy, Planning, Research, and Communication:

strong applications demonstrate extraordinary and innovative approaches to public service, reaching beyond the expected levels of community outreach and core programs generally associated with libraries and museums. Winning institutions can demonstrate that they are deeply embedded in the life of their community and have been a part of positive change.<sup>2</sup>

Dwight McInvaill, director of the Georgetown County (S.C.) Library (a 2007 National Medal winner), stresses the time involved in assembling the nomination package: "The application process took two full weeks of intensive work. I would recommend that applicants allow sufficient time to complete all responses completely and carefully."<sup>3</sup>

The application involves organizing and weaving a coherent story out of many diverse strands. Submitted attachments should directly support the claims of the narrative. Susan Quinn, director of the Ocean County (N.J.) Library (a 2007 National Medal winner), says that their application work involved "gathering past press releases, media clippings, photographs, video, program guides, and other supporting documents that showed the impact of the Ocean County Library on its community."<sup>4</sup> The letters of support

are equally important in conveying the main themes of the application. At the Ocean County Library, they requested letters of support from local organizations that they had previously partnered with, including the Ocean County Chapter of the NAACP and the Ocean County Board of Health.

At IMLS, the review process is extremely competitive. Only five libraries are selected annually, emerging from pools of thirty-eight nominations submitted in 2008, forty in 2007, and fifty-seven in 2006. With national competition this intense, there is no shame in not being selected. Simply accept the rejection, mentally congratulate the winners, and prepare to resubmit. After all the hard work involved in assembling a nomination package, it only makes sense to follow initial rejection by making judicious improvements to the application and resubmitting.

## The Big Day

While there is a \$10,000 grant award, the real importance of the National Medal lies in the opportunity to annually honor a handful of great libraries. To do this, IMLS invites representatives of each winning library to bring a community member to a special ceremony in Washington, D.C. By placing the focus on an individual who has informally benefited from the library's services and programs, the real worth of library services is movingly conveyed.

The 2008 winners were honored at a White House ceremony in October of that year, with Laura Bush presenting the National Medals, as Hillary Clinton did before her. This official ceremony was followed the next day by a symposium where the achievements of each



winning museum and library were presented and discussed.

Among the 2008 presentations by community members, Jody Lynn Armstrong gave a testimony regarding the support of the Skidompha Library in Damariscotta, Maine, at an unusually challenging moment in her life. Armstrong, her husband, and their three cats were forced to evacuate their home in Gulfport, Mississippi, when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005. They retreated to Armstrong's hometown of Damariscotta to rebuild their lives. Through the library, they were able to maintain e-mail contact with employers, schools, family, and friends, as well as being able to fax urgent information to insurance companies. Because of the hurricane, Armstrong had withdrawn from library science school but the Skidompha Library offered work and support, actively encouraging her return to school. "It was a mutually giving and receiving relationship,"

Armstrong said. "It reinforced my love for libraries and my decision to pursue libraries as a career."<sup>5</sup>

Other community members at the 2008 symposium shared their library experiences. Aleks Krapivkin spoke of how he left his home country of Ukraine when he was just ten and found acceptance at his new home through the Skokie (Ill.) Public Library. Judge Cindy S. Lederman told of her collaborative work with the Miami-Dade (Fla.) Public Library to introduce at-risk children to the joys of reading. Daniel I. Rodríguez Torres credited the Jane Stern Dorado Community Library in Puerto Rico with helping him find his calling in life through acting classes offered at the library. Edward Pace shared about how his support of the Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library evolved into a family affair, involving his wife, five children, and even the at-risk community youth he mentors.<sup>6</sup>

## Two 2007 Award Winners

### Georgetown County (S.C.) Library

Through four branches, the Georgetown County Library (GCL) serves a largely rural, disadvantaged area in South Carolina, located midway between more fashionable addresses in Myrtle Beach and Charleston. Many of the sixty-thousand residents live in poverty and unemployment is presently over 12 percent. Over the years, GCL has worked hard to develop innovative programs to engage the community. They established small libraries of books and music in approximately forty childcare centers throughout the county, retained a touring storyteller to work with childcare providers and preschoolers, set up a digital website documenting county history, established a program to help low-income residents access quality health-care information, and developed an interactive gaming program for teens. These forward-thinking programs established the library system as a center of community in the county.

With Library Director Dwight McInvaill serving as official nominator, GCL sent a strong package of nomination materials to IMLS, stressing their key role as a leader on diverse fronts. For the symposium following the 2007 White House award ceremony, GCL invited George Geer to tell his story. Geer credited the library with making him into the man he is today. He spoke of growing up at the library, attending puppet shows and storytimes, and explained how his library experiences spurred him to obtain a master's degree in English literature leading to a career teaching high school English and journalism.<sup>7</sup>

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*"...an additional resource when presented with the challenging issues of salaries." – Sara Zumwalt, Litchfield, IL Library*



The \$10,000 award from IMLS enabled GCL to develop a World War II oral-history video project. According to McInvaill:

Thanks to this money, we successfully videotaped remembrances from about seventy men and women on their World War II experiences. Additionally, we persuaded many interviewees to allow us to digitize their World War II photographs. . . . This interesting material showcases and preserves our local heritage concerning one of America's finest generations.<sup>8</sup>

### **Hoopla Branch/Kim Yerton Memorial Library**

A Hupa tribal member, Kim Yerton had a dream of establishing a local repository for the preservation of records and artifacts pertaining to Hupa culture. She researched and compiled existing archival documents and photographs, and then wrote a bibliography that remains a standard source, available on file at the Newberry Library in Chicago where she had received a library fellowship. Yerton died in 1979 at the very young age of twenty-four.

The Hoopa Branch/Kim Yerton Memorial Library (KYML) in Humboldt County, California, proudly bears her name and commemorates her belief in Native American pride and community service. As California's only joint

county-tribal library on an Indian reservation, the library offers the community a well-rounded collection with a special emphasis on Native American literature. Members of three local tribal communities—the Hupa, Yurok, and Karuk—regularly use the library. The Native American special collections at the library help to preserve and honor the traditions of the community, very much in the spirit of Yerton.

As a community library, KYML is a hub for students of all age levels, preschool classes, and adults. The library offers monthly special events for families with young children; weekly storytimes for preschoolers; a summer reading club; frequent special events; and a weekly gathering place for knitters, basket makers, and quilters.

Awarded a National Medal in 2007, the library applied its \$10,000 award toward the installation of wireless Internet services and the purchase of four wireless public access computers. To increase the depth of their special collections, they digitized a collection of cassette tapes from the California Indian Library Collection at the Berkeley Library, and made it available through their public access computers and as a link on the Humboldt County Library website. Additionally, the funds were used to purchase new children's nonfiction books, young adult books, and new titles for the collection of Native American books.<sup>9</sup>

The work of libraries such as GCL and KYML are emblematic of the high standards that IMLS celebrates at its annual National Medal ceremonies. On October 6, five libraries were announced as 2009 National Medal winners:

1. Braille Institute Library Services, Los Angeles
2. Gail Borden Public Library, Elgin, Illinois
3. Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon
4. Pritzker Military Library, Chicago
5. Stark County District Library, Canton, Ohio

Contenders for future awards should begin preparing their nominations now. 

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## PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIANS—

A new grant opportunity is coming your way this fall! Kick off the school year by applying online, beginning September 8, 2009, for the

### WE THE PEOPLE BOOKSHELF on **A More Perfect Union**

A project of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in partnership with the ALA Public Programs Office.

4,000 public and school (K–12) libraries will be selected to receive the Bookshelf—a collection of classic books for young readers, with selected titles available in Spanish translation.

The Bookshelf program is part of NEH's *We the People* initiative, which supports projects that strengthen the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture. Applications will be accepted online from September 8, 2009, through January 29, 2010.

Visit [publicprograms.ala.org/bookshelf](http://publicprograms.ala.org/bookshelf) to access a list of programming ideas. Just in time for the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, **A More Perfect Union** invites reflection on the idea of the United States as a "union," a One as well as a Many.

The Bookshelf includes bonus materials:

- a DVD edition of *The Civil War*, the award-winning documentary by Ken Burns, including the rights to show the series to public audiences,
- the companion book to *The Civil War*,
- *Declaring Independence: The Origin and Influence of America's Founding Document*, edited by Christian Y. Dupont.

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Contributing Editor

**MICHAEL GARRETT**

**FARRELLY** is a Youth Services Librarian and graphic novelist living in Chicago; mgfarrelly@gmail.com; www.mgfarrelly.com; Twitter: @mgfarrelly.

Michael is reading *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution* by Richard Dawkins, *House of Suns* by Alastair Reynolds, and *The Math Book: From Pythagoras to the 57th Dimension, 250 Milestones in the History of Mathematics* by Clifford A. Pickover.

“Passing Notes” focuses on young adult service issues, including programming, collection development, and creating stronger connections with young adult patrons. The column will address these topics with a humorous bent and an awareness that the key to working with young adults is constant reinvention.

# Style and Substance

At the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference this past summer, a fellow librarian told me about her breathless appreciation for the magazine *Kiki*. This recent library school grad was cruising the aisles of her first major conference when she came across the *Kiki* display and was bowled over by the inventive magazine, which bills itself as being for girls of “style and substance.” The enthusiasm came to me second hand in the form of issues and effusive praise.

An issue of *Kiki* is a marvelous thing. This is not a hyper-slick glossy, or a (slightly) bowdlerized version of some fashion mag. *Kiki* is about using arts and fashion as a means to engaging young women’s creativity. It’s a magazine as likely to inspire a change in wardrobe as it is a change in global perspective. *Kiki* treads the fine line between addressing both the *young* and *adult* in YA magazines. It’s a magazine that leaves space for readers to create their own work on its pages and uses fashion as a means of talking about everything from far-flung world culture to physical science.

Jamie Bryant, founder and editor-in-chief of *Kiki*, was kind enough to answer some questions about this fresh take on mags, as well as what makes *Kiki* so different from other magazines and a bit about a mascot named Mowgli.

**Public Libraries:** Where did the idea for *Kiki* come from? Tell us a bit about the history of the magazine and how it developed. Also, tell us about your background in education and publishing.

**Jamie Bryant:** The idea for *Kiki* came to me in February 2007, when what I was doing professionally (developing college textbooks) collided with my personal life. At the time, our team was finishing work on a new style of college textbook that was more visual and drew graphic inspiration from magazines. It had been an intense development process during which many hours were spent brainstorming and inventing with my business partner and our client. While all that was happening, my daughters were becoming

more interested in magazines, but I noticed they were simply checking out *Dog Fancy* from the school library week after week. When I inquired why all the repetition, they said there wasn't anything else of interest. That got me thinking about their interests. They both have quirky, fun, very individual styles, and they both like fashion. What would a fashion magazine for pre- and early-teen girls look like? What should it look like?

Because I'm an academic at heart, I was challenged to find a way to blend real content from a range of academic disciplines with the art and style of a fashion magazine. All that thinking ended up at *Kiki*.

**PL:** *Kiki* uses fashion as a means of exploring a wide range of topics. How did you hit on this approach?

**JB:** I have to go back to my daughters for this inspiration. Even though they like fashion, they like other things just as well: robotics, French horn, film, theater, popular mechanics, and Greek mythology. But because the most visible expression of their personality is their interest in fashion, they were at risk of being categorized as shallow and superficial. That conundrum is one that stays with women for the duration of their lives. Stereotypically, frumpily dressed women must be smart and deep, and stylish women must be dumb and shallow. I think that's fundamentally wrong and detrimental to girls' and women's health.

**PL:** When you look at the wider magazine market for tweens and teens what trends do you see as positive or negative?

**JB:** When I looked at magazines for pre- and early-teen girls, I found two

ends of a spectrum: completely educational and complete pap. As a result, younger girls are being drawn to magazines designed for an older audience. That trend concerns me greatly. Another troublesome trend is the intense focus on celebrities and the quantity of magazines that revolve entirely around Hollywood stars. Total absorption in that kind of content creates a mindset that success equals fame.

On the positive side, the success and proliferation of niche special-interest magazines mean girls have more options for substantive entertainment reading. Also positive is the growing acceptance of magazines as a way to engage reluctant readers, be they girls or boys.

**PL:** *Kiki*'s emphasis on participation through self-expression is evident throughout. How did you decide to make this part of the magazine?

**JB:** A longtime associate of mine, who teaches at Boston College, recommended I read a book written by Juliet Schor, also of Boston College, and titled *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child*. As a developer of a principles of marketing textbook, I found Schor's discussion about marketing to kids extremely



**Kiki magazine**

compelling. She draws wonderful distinctions between kids as consumers versus producers. Her arguments were the inspiration for us to incorporate a productive aspect to the magazine. Plus, I've always been an advocate for open-ended test questions, and our focus on participation and idea generation is really an expression of our ethos. We want girls to be doers, to be engaged rather than watchers.

**PL:** Tell us a bit about your staff and their backgrounds.

**JB:** Our in-house staff bring experience from various disciplines, including art history, marketing, French literature, business, graphic design, journalism, biology, sociology, and finance. Three of us have also been students in fashion design programs at one time or another.

Despite our great variety, we're incredibly similar in one regard: our commitment to growing strong girls.

**PL:** Many magazines for older audiences talk about the "average reader." Who do you see as the average *Kiki* reader?

**JB:** *Kiki* readers are active participants in life. They want to learn, they want to grow, and they want to try new things. In that regard, they are adventurous. Our average reader recognizes when content respects her as an intelligent girl. (She also recognizes when she's being pandered to or patronized.) Our average reader is searching for her authentic self and looking for support in expressing that self. She's thinking about what it means to become a woman and is receptive to messages about growing up.

Having said all that, our "average" is hard to pin down, partly because we have appeal across such a broad age range—from six to eighteen years old, and even women in their sixties and seventies. Our oldest subscriber passed away in the spring. She was ninety-three.

**PL:** One thing that struck me was your solicitation for both professional writers and young readers. How has the response been from your audience?

**JB:** The response from professional women writers and practitioners has been extremely positive. Our outside contributors have wonderful, rich experience and are very supportive of our mission and philosophy. Recently, we accepted a pitch for an article and only found out as the magazine was nearly on press that the contributor was a high-school



Jamie Bryant

senior. Even though our readers may be concentrated in the eight- to fourteen-year-old range, there are opportunities for participation by older girls. We ask librarians, teachers, and parents to encourage girls who think they're "too old" for *Kiki* to think about writing articles, drawing illustrations, devising crafts, or submitting photography.

**PL:** Fashion magazines are often accused of engendering body issues in young women, how does *Kiki*'s approach avoid such issues?

**JB:** We use real girls, not professional models, and we don't make them up with cosmetics. After we take the pictures, we don't digitally enhance their appearance or make them look like anything other than who they are. In addition, we are very conscious about diversity. We want to present girls with a variety of complexions, body shapes, body development, and overall looks. We make sure to include tall girls, short girls, and girls with glasses, with braces, with freckles, with short hair, with long hair, with red hair, and so on. We also are attentive to show older girls, young women, and mature women. Girls can see themselves and where they're going.

**PL:** What magazines and books inspired you as a young woman?

**JB:** I confess to have been completely absorbed by detective fiction as a young woman. Nancy Drew was my hero, but I also had a deep affinity for Turtle Wexler from *The Westing Game*. Interestingly, my commitment to detectives trumped my interest in strong female characters, and I became a devotee of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe books and Agatha Christie's mysteries. All that attention to detective fiction, I think, inspired me to practice determination and to want to figure things out—even if the answers weren't obvious at the beginning. In fact, when the answers are obvious or easy, I find the experience of reaching a final solution less satisfying overall.

**PL:** Tell us about Mowgli, the *Kiki* mascot who is hidden in every issue.

**JB:** Mowgli is our family's pet. We got him in the spring of 2007 around the time that the magazine was moving from the "what if?" stage to the "we can do this" stage. Our older dog had died, and we had been looking for a new dog, but still, we got him on impulse. He was the size of my shoe, and it wasn't until I saw him in our house that I realized I hadn't thought things through. I couldn't leave him at home all day while I worked, so he began to come with me to the office. Two years later, he's also the *Kiki* and B-books pet. He knows the folks in our downtown Cincinnati neighborhood, and even now, he's sleeping on his bed behind my chair. He found his way into the magazine because girls love dogs (and cats). Plus he's a good sport in a costume. 🐕





# ADDRESSING Special Needs AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS IN LIBRARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**JEFF KATZ** is Adjunct Professor, School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies, University of British Columbia and History Project Leader, Allied Arts Foundation of Seattle; jkatz7702@yahoo.com. He is reading *Stompin' at the Savoy: The Story of Norma Miller* by Alan Govenar and Martin French, *Riot* by Walter Dean Myers, and *Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet* by Maria Mudd Ruth.

**I**n his recent article about serving special needs teens in the public library, Elsworth Rockefeller makes a very telling statement: "Serving youth with special needs was not addressed in my library school courses or practicum work."<sup>1</sup> When I first read Rockefeller's words in early 2008, I found myself filled with a feeling that seemed to be a strange but potent blend of familiarity and exhilaration. The familiarity sprung from the fact that I was reading words that I had heard repeatedly from others throughout my library career (and with which I agreed without hesitation): Library schools teach us little, if anything, about working with populations that may be deemed "special" (or "nontraditional" or "disadvantaged"). Rockefeller's lament is one that seems to be shared almost universally by members of the library profession. And, as such, it points to an issue that is both very real and in need of urgent attention.

At the very same time, the feeling of exhilaration that I felt was due to the fact that, at long last, it was possible to see in print a belief and plea that had been, in essence, almost exclusively verbal heretofore. It seemed as though a kind of starting point had been established; a quiet, but powerful call to arms. Accordingly, my goal in this article is to carry this idea just a step or two further; to take up the call for an increase in library school curricula devoted to special needs and at-risk populations (with a particular emphasis on teens) and amplify the volume as much as possible.



To be sure, throughout my twenty-year career as a library professional, I have participated in countless discussions with colleagues regarding the deficiencies of library school education. Quite frequently, these generally impassioned discussions result from an unpleasant or frustrating on-the-job experience. A librarian, perhaps close to or actually in tears, will decry the lack of adequate preparation she or he received while pursuing an MLS or MLIS: "Why didn't they talk about this in library school?!" And, while this lament is often entirely justified, there are many cases, in all honesty, in which it is not. Sometimes, after all, lessons linger in one's consciousness and sometimes they quickly drift away.

However, it has become strikingly clear to me that certain complaints truly stand out and demand very serious attention, not only because of the fact that they are repeated so regularly by graduates from such a diverse range of schools, but also because, quite frankly, I concur wholeheartedly. Take the burning, grossly under-taught issues of the problem patron and the problem supervisor, for example. So numerous are the complaints I have heard about the lack of discussion in MLS and MLIS programs of these two distressing and all-too-common realities and so frequently have I found myself feeling the very same anguish and outrage when forced to deal with a menacing library user or irrational authority figure, that it is nearly impossible to avoid thinking that some grounding, some fundamental training in a professional degree program may be able to arm a librarian with at least a few handy tools or coping mechanisms that can be reached for and put to use whenever such circumstances rear their disturbing heads.

Without question, on-the-job training is not at all something to be taken lightly and certainly never fails to enhance and expand the skills of anyone in any field, including librarianship. However, inevitable realities of the uncomfortable, confusing, and, in such cases as the ones just described, unpleasant kind can and should be prime topics in any professional program. In truth, these are practical matters, just as worthy of serious attention as the development of effective reference skills and an ability to build and manage library collections.

Thus, we come back to the very practical, but generally neglected matter of understanding and learning how to work best with special needs and at-risk populations—teens, in particular.

As fate will have it, at almost the precise time that Rockefeller's article was published in *Public Libraries*, I was busy making arrangements with the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival,

and Information Studies (SLAIS) to teach a summer course called "Library Services to Special Needs and At-Risk Young Adults." The planets, in a sense, were aligned. In the latter part of this article, I will discuss this course further; however, at this stage, it is useful to share one piece of information—my list of three essential goals for the course. This list, I think, signifies what may be the basic elements that any MLS or MLIS program can offer its students in order to provide a foundation for excellence (or, at least, competency) in serving special needs and at-risk individuals:

1. To provide students with a deeper understanding of at-risk young adults and young adults with special needs.
2. To provide students with an understanding of the importance of including and involving special needs and at-risk young adults in all library planning, programming, and services.
3. To provide students with an introduction to collections, programs, and partnerships with other youth-serving community agencies for special needs and at-risk young adults.

Clearly, these are goals that are relatively modest; yet, even in their modesty, they go a long way toward raising the awareness, skill levels, and sensitivity of future librarians. As has been stated by countless contributors to library literature when describing best practices for working with special needs and at-risk populations, attitude is perhaps the most important ingredient for success. In keeping with this widely accepted belief, these three goals strive to affect the attitude of every student, encouraging an understanding that services for special needs and at-risk populations are not an add-on for libraries, but, rather, lie at the very heart of all library work. As Michael Gorman has expressed so forcefully, the "historic mission" of the library is "to help everybody, but especially the poor, socially disadvantaged, and powerless."<sup>2</sup> Yet libraries and librarians, all too often, are at a loss or actually resistant when it comes to working with non-traditional, less mainstream members of society.

The very term, *special needs*, it can be said, implies for many an outsider status. Among librarians, the feeling can arise—especially in times of tight, dwindling budgets—that there are necessary services and those that are extraneous or non-core (or, as Julie Hersberger remarks in reference to attitudes sometimes expressed in libraries toward homeless individuals, a sense of "worthy" and "unworthy" patrons).<sup>3</sup> The above-mentioned choice of placing



the emphasis on services for mainstream users at the expense of non-users and those who are not viewed as “core” (those who are “less deserving”), means that many either will feel unwelcome in the library or else will continue to live their lives without any awareness or consideration of libraries whatsoever. In spite of the fact that the library may have an abundance of material and resources that may serve to provide needed assistance, new directions, and fresh ideas—and although the mission of every library in North America is to serve equally each member of its respective community—a high percentage of individuals may feel or actually be excluded from the shared treasures of the library.

In terms of populations that can suffer conscious or unconscious exclusion, it is possible to cite the following:

- those who are not seen as making “proper” use of library resources (for example, the homeless, those who are at-risk, and so on);
- those who may be thought of as harder to comprehend, requiring training, resources, equipment, and staff time that the library does not, cannot, or will not supply (for example, individuals with disabilities);
- those who represent populations that some librarians view as too controversial or to which some librarians have a personal objection (for example, LGBTQ individuals, pregnant teens and teen parents, substance abusers, and so on); and
- those who are in programs or institutions that may be deemed alternative and may require outreach that a library is unwilling or unprepared to undertake (for example, individuals in detention, special schools, foster care, and so on).

Of course, it would be completely foolish to suggest that the reason that lurks ominously behind every instance of confusion and exclusion is lack of sufficient coursework in library school. Indeed, as anyone who has ever suffered poor management from a supervisor with stellar management training will affirm, problems will arise regardless of education credentials. Nevertheless, it can certainly be said that the lack of adequate readiness in terms of special needs services is by no means a positive reality and it is obvious that a more solid foundation would, at the very least, raise awareness and increase confidence within the future librarian.

Library education programs strive nobly to supply students with the tools and skills that they will need for the provision of top quality, easily portable, core

library services. In no way is this a simple task, especially now, when new technology is so rapidly changing and so many new applications need to be learned by a library school student. Yet, in the pursuit of the core, we once again discover that those services (and, by extension, those populations) that may be viewed as non-core will fall once more by the wayside or else will be given only short shrift as students work diligently toward the prized degree. Truly, this is a sad and harmful sacrifice to make.

One extraordinarily valuable lesson—among so many—that I learned this summer from the extraordinary, inspirational students who opted to take my course was just how hungry so many library school students are for opportunities to discuss and gain more knowledge of critical philosophical issues in librarianship—issues that seem to be seen repeatedly as not worthy of being required or even offered in a complete, three-credit format. Yet, how much more fully rounded, how much more passionate and committed and versatile would entry-level librarians be with a more ethics-based background and a clearer understanding of the essential importance of libraries in every conceivable community—from towns and cities to primary and secondary schools, from colleges and universities to governments, corporations, and organizations?

In their excellent contribution to Neal-Schuman's How-to-Do-It Manual series, *Preparing Staff to Serve Patrons with Disabilities*, Courtney Deines-Jones and Connie Jean Van Fleet make a very blunt and thought-provoking statement about problems that can arise from a staff that is inadequately trained in working with disabled individuals:

Reactions of well-meaning staff members who are unprepared to serve patrons with disabilities can fall to two extremes. On the one hand, some will hesitate to offer help to library users who have disabilities out of fear of being thought of as patronizing or overbearing. On the other hand, they may be solicitous to the point of being stifling.<sup>4</sup>

Without question, this thought can be extended easily to all special needs and at-risk populations. Deines-Jones and Van Fleet, in essence, are appealing to both libraries and library schools to be sure that training staff members and students, respectively, in the best, most effective approaches to serving special needs and at-risk individuals should be a top priority. In the case of libraries, Deines-Jones and Van Fleet would urge a commitment to ongoing workshops and staff development programs, while librarians





themselves are advised to be fully aware of the need for unceasing advocacy, knowledge sharing, and community participation in all areas. At the same time, library schools must modify their curricula to include some element of mandatory coursework or fieldwork relating to special needs and at-risk members of society.

In the early part of this decade, Ann Curry, a former professor and colleague of mine at SLAIS, undertook a fascinating and eye-opening study of the manner in which LGBTQ teens are treated in various Canadian public libraries. Curry's work revealed that for such teens the library experience was a kind of mixed bag—sometimes very positive, sometimes moderately so, and, alarmingly, often rather negative. As Curry evaluated her findings, she made the observation that “a good reference librarian can mean the difference between the youth fleeing the library or considering the library a helpful refuge.”<sup>5</sup> Clearly, this sense of the library as the helpful refuge—or, as Robert McNulty puts it, “the great good place”<sup>6</sup>—is something that all members of the library profession seek desperately to realize. Ensuring that MLS and MLIS programs provide students with the grounding they need to serve members of the community who are outside what is considered generally to be the

mainstream is one extremely important step that can be taken toward the fulfillment of this shining goal. 

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## Who is the Person in Charge at Your Library?

Ensuring that your library is always staffed with a Person in Charge (PIC) can improve staff and patron safety, provide for more effective handling of challenging situations, and enable system-wide tracking of incidents and accidents.

The PLA 2010 preconference program, “Tag, You’re It! Implementing A ‘Person in Charge’ (PIC) Training Program” will show you how your library can benefit from this practice. By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- Understand the PIC philosophy and how your library can establish and benefit from instituting a PIC program;
- Learn what it takes to set up a PIC program and how to be an effective PIC, including expectations, standardizing procedures, support systems, problem solving processes, and handling emergency situations, and complaints against policy; and
- Be able to conduct a PIC training class that ensures consistent quality and competence from staff members that function as PICs.

This preconference will be held on Wednesday, March 24, from 8:30 a.m. to noon. You can register and see the complete list of PLA preconference programs at [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org). 



# Problem

## SITUATIONS, *NOT* PROBLEM PATRONS

**STEVEN SLAVICK** is the Eastgate Branch Manager for the Algonquin (Ill.) Area Public Library District; [sslavick@aapld.org](mailto:sslavick@aapld.org). He is currently writing a thriller similar to those written by his favorite novelist, Dean Koontz.

If you've worked in libraries long enough—particularly if you've spent your time in an urban setting—you've dealt with upset patrons and wondered at one time or another whether one of them might resort to physical abuse. After all, no matter how hard you try, you cannot control how any individual might act in any given situation. They might curse, shout, spit, throw objects, or strike you. In my twenty-year career, I've encountered each of these responses, and I've discovered that the best way to avoid such treatment is to manage your own thoughts, feelings, and actions. Only after you've mastered your emotions can you rely on the policies and procedures that your organization has created to best deal with the unpredictable scenarios your patrons might present.

Every library, regardless of the type or locale, has contended with angry patrons. But calling these individuals problematic is too simplistic and often just plain wrong. Whether the patrons are homeless; suffering from substance abuse; or inflicted with mental, emotional, or physical illness, these circumstances do not by their nature equate to disturbing behavior. There must be some trigger, or some specific issue that irritates these patrons (as well as many of our otherwise calm patrons) from reacting in ways that disturb others from working in peace. Very few patrons walk into the library looking to start trouble. Therefore, we shouldn't brand them with the "problem" tag, but instead call these problem situations.

Many factors can influence a patron from lashing out. In some instances, without our realizing it, we contribute to their exasperation. How? By refusing to give our patrons the respect they deserve. In a dispute over a fine or a damaged return, some patrons may pull the "I pay your salary" card, both to inject fear and to influence your behavior in their favor. But many of us fail to realize that this is a true statement. We serve our communities, which means that we are not only answerable to our supervisors, but also to our patrons. Without our patrons, we would not have jobs. They deserve our respect and our best customer service skills. But sometimes they criticize library staff and expect too much leniency.

When a patron stomps up to the circulation desk to argue about a book that should have been returned months ago, he may accuse the library of instituting heavy fines similar to that of a mafia loan shark, or he may criticize you to persuade you to waive the fine. Without a valid excuse, we know they know they are at fault. Therefore, they own the problem.<sup>1</sup> Regardless, most of us will feel our blood pressure rising, our attention span shortening, and our patience dwindling.

Do not take patrons' criticism personally. And do not argue with the patron. Library staff didn't stand on the patron's property with flaming torches and signs proclaiming him evil for not returning his book on time;





we sent him e-mail, snail mail reminders, text messages, or placed polite telephone calls to remind him of the overdue material. Besides, any number of possibilities could have triggered their annoyance: they could have just lost their job, been served with divorce papers, or been involved in a car accident earlier in the day. The fine may have sparked their irritation, and they needed to blow off some steam. No one likes having someone shouting at him or her, but you won't get a patron to settle down by talking over him or by allowing your strained nerves to get the best of you.

In these instances, the best way to handle the situation is by active listening.<sup>2</sup> Use a sincere tone when acknowledging how difficult it is to work all day then return home to pick up a child from band practice before returning home to make dinner for the family. Compassion often goes a long way to soothe one's annoyance. If you recognize their frustration, you help stabilize their behavior. After all, how many people will be angry at you for agreeing with them?

What follows are four problem situations and recommendations to avoid full-blown confrontations, as well as the most important topics managers should consider when training their employees to handle disputes.

## The Blame Game

A patron approached the reference desk with tears in her eyes. I listened to her story and said, "So if I understand you right, your computer won't let you access your e-mail account. Well, that's got to be annoying. Let's go take a look and find out what's wrong." As far as I knew there were no gremlins in our computer hard drives, preventing our patrons from accessing their e-mail, but it's always best to restate the problem, so you can place the emphasis on the problem while not blaming the patron's computer efficiency.

After I stopped by her computer terminal and we logged into her account, I immediately recognized the problem. "I know from experience that with free e-mail accounts, you only get a certain amount of storage space. It might be a good idea to free up some space by deleting spam and e-mails that you might not need."

"It's never been a problem before," she said, straining to keep her voice from quivering. "I don't know why you're doing this to me."

The situation has gone from the patron blaming the computer to blaming me. I didn't take it personally. How could I? She had almost thirty-two thou-

sand e-mails in her inbox. It wouldn't help matters to blame the patron for her unfamiliarity with computers. I focused on the problem at hand. "I'm sorry this happened, but I really think it might help to delete all the e-mails you don't need. I have a feeling that will free up the problem." When dealing with problem situations, apologizing to patrons is not an admission of guilt—if you target what is frustrating your patron. In this instance, you're only acknowledging that the problem has upset the patron. Once you've grown accustomed to depersonalizing interactions with upset patrons, while at the same time empathizing with them, you can set about resolving the problem.

## You're Not the Boss of Me

No one likes approaching a patron or a group of patrons to ask them to lower their voices or reduce the volume of their iPods. But most library policies include a no-tolerance clause for those who disrupt others from working in a peaceful environment. Regardless of the scenario, when one or more patrons prevent others in the library from uninterrupted research, they are breaking policy and must be asked to abide by the rules.

In this type of situation, one cannot be sure if the patron has a hearing impairment or if they don't realize how loud the music might be to others in the library. Use a gentle smile and open with something like, "Excuse me, guys. Could you please lower the volume?" Try not to draw attention to the "offenders." It's always best to start out friendly and polite. "If you come on too strong you can easily embarrass them into a confrontation."<sup>3</sup> You are trying to convince them to follow policy, so frowning at them or handing them the library code of conduct at this juncture may antagonize them.

In most cases, the patrons will lower their volume without complaint. In others, they may ignore you. Give them a couple of minutes to respond. If others nearby noticed the interaction, they may want some time to save face and pretend that they are lowering their volume of their own accord. If after a few minutes the patrons haven't settled down but have become defiant, visit them once more. Adopt a neutral expression, present the library code of conduct, and say, "I'm afraid I can still hear your music from across the room, and it's preventing others from working. Please lower the volume, or I'll have to ask you to leave." By stating that you'll "have to" ask them to leave, you are only following the library policy and not making this a personal mission to kick them out of the library. Before you leave, offer a







genuine smile and thank them for following the rules.

If they argue by saying that another group is making noise, or eating, or a multitude of other possible policy violations, do not let their argument sidestep the issue. Stay on task. State the facts (the policy) and the consequences for refusing to follow them. If they once more ignore the warning, they have disrespected the library's mission, the library staff, and the other patrons in the library. If you feel uncomfortable confronting the group again, ask a colleague or a security guard to join you while you ask them to leave. Doing so does not put all the pressure solely on you to enforce the rules. The offenders will most likely look at each other and laugh, collect their belongings while arguing about the library or the staff and within a minute or two they will leave. If they once more disregard you, the best bet is stating the following: "Either you can leave, or I can call the police and have them escort you out of the building. It's your choice." Leave it short, formal, and impersonal. Talking too much will invite an argument. If they call your bluff, turn around, pick up the phone, and call the police.

But what happens if this group returns and continues to become a disruptive presence? Treat the situation as you had before, but be sure to follow a set of predetermined guidelines that increase in severity. For instance, after informing the group that they must leave the library for the second time, you should convey that they would be banned for one week. If their behavior continues to be an issue each time they visit, extend the ban to one month, six months, one year, and so on.

## Decision Time

Many problem situations revolve around disagreements with library policy. A woman stops by the circulation desk with three young children buzzing around her while she drops down a couple of books. She hands the clerk her library card only to discover that she owes \$20 in fines. After being told that she needs to pay down her fines to a certain amount before being allowed to check out her materials, she shouts at her children to stop flitting around her, making an even more disruptive situation than her children had already created. "I returned those books on time," she says. "And even if I didn't, I don't have that much cash on me, and I don't have my checkbook. I have an essay due in two days. I haven't even started it, and I don't have time to come back here."

Only a hardened heart couldn't empathize with a mother who presumably takes night classes while

caring for three hyperactive children. Show some of that compassion in your expression and in your voice and say, "I'm really sorry, I wish I could help, but our policy states that—"

"Wait a minute, your policy? What policy? Do I look like a criminal? I'm not trying to steal your books."

All public service desks should have copies of the library's code of conduct (preferably a clear and concise one-page document) available. Hand the mother a copy, but do not point out or read the infraction to her, which may seem condescending.

"That's ridiculous." The woman's five-year-old slams his rubber dinosaurs together and growls, giving sound effects to the rumble between a Brontosaurus and a Tyrannosaurus Rex. The mother smacks his arm. "What did I just tell you? You better knock it off or . . ."

The circulation clerks are now facing a more dangerous situation than simply a patron who can't afford to pay down her fines. While perhaps unlikely, the predicament may lead to child abuse. The library's code of conduct surely has no tolerance for the mistreatment of others in the library. Is swatting a child in the arm commensurate with slapping him in the face or worse? Only the clerks on duty can determine the level of danger, but no one is capable of predicting how someone may react under a stressful situation.

In this instance, the clerk should say, "It's probably best for my supervisor to speak with you. Please allow me a minute or two, and I'm sure she'll try to help out." Do not hand her off to another staff member without the authority or the experience to handle the dispute. Leaving serves two purposes. First, it allows the mother to cool off, regain her composure, and speak to her children to ensure that they do not disturb others. Second, it allows the clerk to update her supervisor about the situation and the level of the mother's frustration.

If the supervisor assesses the situation and finds that the patron hasn't calmed down but has only grown more upset, she has a decision to make: uphold one policy (not allowing checkout to someone who owes large fines on her account) or acknowledge that the patron may soon break another (abusing her child). If the mother admonishes the child again, this will give other patrons in the vicinity the impression that the library is greedy and more concerned about a few dollars than ensuring a peaceful environment for the community.

However, if the mother harms the child again, depending on the severity of the blow, the supervisor should tell the parent that striking the child again



# I heard a woman swearing at the circulation clerks and demanding to use the telephone. I hurried up to the circulation desk to find a drunken woman jabbing a finger toward a clerk.

will force her to phone the police to ensure the child's safety. If it is a more forceful blow, one that gives the supervisor the impression that the abuse will continue to a greater degree, she should call the police immediately.

## Better Safe than Sorry

At the reference desk at the back of the library, I heard a woman swearing at the circulation clerks and demanding to use the telephone so she could call her husband. As the librarian in charge that evening, I hurried up to the circulation desk to find a drunken woman jabbing a finger toward a clerk at the desk who was calling for the security guard.

"I want that phone. I got to make a phone call and get my husband here to pick me up."

"Miss," I said, walking up to her. "Please lower your voice." I kept my distance, but I could smell the fumes of alcohol drifting off her. "We have a public phone in the lobby. You might try—"

"I'm not going out there. I'm using the phone you got right there."

After this woman cursed at me for not allowing her to use the phone, I said, "If you don't lower your voice, I'll be forced to call the police." Stating this made it known that nothing but her behavior would prompt me to make the call.

"Did you hear me," she said, closing the distance between us. "I'm going to use that phone."

Because of her inebriated state, the patron would not listen to reason and continued to disrupt others from using the library's resources without interruption. But once you mention calling the police, especially when the patron is loud and either unwilling or unable to follow the rules, you should follow through and call the police.

The security guard reached the desk and walked over to the lady, but remained far enough away not to intrude upon her personal space. I went behind the circulation desk, picked up the phone, and dialed the police. After I finished up with the police operator, I turned back to the patron only to discover her standing directly in front of me. I had no

time to avoid getting slapped in the face.

My mistake. I'd turned my back on the patron. Having dealt with dozens of drunk patrons over the years, I'd never had to call the police while one berated me, and I'd forgotten one simple but very important rule: always keep an eye on the patron. In this case, she'd moved too quickly for the security guard to prevent her from hurrying behind the circulation desk. Besides, the guard wouldn't lay a hand on the patron. Feeling threatened, she may attack him or press charges against him for "assaulting" her.

I heard more than saw the group of patrons at the computer terminals ten feet away sucking in their breath with shock. If a patron strikes you, you have every right to protect yourself. As a manager, however, I recognized that acting rash would become a public relations nightmare. That, coupled with the realization that this woman would not lash out again, convinced me to lead the woman out of the library by guiding her toward the exit and asking her to leave in a firm voice.

## Staff Training


To help staff members who deal with problem situations on an ongoing basis, library managers should meet with their staff at monthly meetings to discuss these matters. Sometimes only ten minutes is needed to allow staff to vent or trade stories, but, just as important, it allows them to learn how to approach these situations and what strategies to avoid. A byproduct of this type of exchange is that it helps to create a stronger team atmosphere. Also discuss policies and the procedures needed to enforce them. Depending on the environment, it might be helpful to use code words to call for security guards or further assistance, but make sure all staff members in the department are familiar with that name or term. Nothing is worse than having one person secretly call for help when his or her colleagues aren't aware of the code word.

When you give employees training and guidance, "trust them to make the right decision. Employees who are trusted respond to that trust. They are more



committed to their work and are happier employees with higher morale.”<sup>4</sup> But even if you work in an affluent community that rarely sees confrontations, managers should still speak with their staff about problem situations at least once per quarter. Staff who don’t know how to handle these situations may not know what signs to look for in order to prevent one from occurring. Above all, hold each person in the library accountable for his or her actions, and do not allow favoritism to take place. Doing so only increases the potential for misinterpretation and miscommunication, which in turn enhances the likelihood of problem situations.

## Conclusion


The key to diffusing problem situations is to use a combination of active listening, empathizing with the patron in question, staying on topic, and maintaining an impersonal but flexible approach. By using each of these techniques in tandem, library employees will decrease the likelihood of facing arguments or physical confrontation. 

## References

1. Nathan M. Smith, “Active Listening: Alienating Patron Problems through Communication,” in *Patron Behavior in Libraries: A Handbook of Positive Approaches to Negative Situations*, ed. Beth McNeil and Denise J. Johnson (Chicago: ALA, 1996): 128.
2. Ibid., 130.
3. Warren Graham, *Black Belt Librarians: Every Librarian's Real World Guide to a Safer Workplace* (Charlotte, N.C.: Pure Heart Pr., 2006): 24.
4. Sharon W. Bullard, “Gypsies, Tramps, and Rage: Coping with Difficult Patrons,” in *Helping the Difficult Library Patron: New Approaches to Examining and Resolving a Long-Standing and Ongoing Problem*, ed. Kwasi Sarkodie-Mensah (Binghamton, N.Y.: The Haworth Information Pr., 2002): 250.

## Justifying Your Trip to PLA 2010

We know that many travel and training budgets have been slashed, and some libraries are experiencing severe financial problems. So here are some ideas you might want to focus on when requesting to attend PLA 2010:

- Remind your supervisor that PLA conferences are totally focused on public librarianship. From the exhibits to the educational programming and author events, the conference is planned *by* public librarians *for* public librarians, and packed with learning experiences that you can bring back to the library. Also point out that you can attend workshops on a variety of topics while you are at PLA 2010—more bang for your buck!
- Examine the preliminary program and national conference website ([www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org)), then tell your supervisor exactly what information you plan to bring back to the library—as a return on the investment.
- Offer to prepare and deliver a short presentation or Q & A for your colleagues—to share what you have learned. Or blog the event for your colleagues. This will enable your entire library to reap the benefits of your attendance at PLA 2010.
- Share the program and speaker handouts with your colleagues.
- There is an added benefit to attending the conference—all PLA 2010 attendees will have access to the PLA Virtual Conference.
- Be ready with a plan to show who will cover for you while you are attending the conference.
- Offer to share a room to reduce hotel expenses—you can find a roommate on the PLA room-share wiki.
- And finally, don't forget that PLA and Oregon Library Association members qualify for a lower registration rate. 



# WELCOMING NEWCOMERS WITH Practical LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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**T**u Biblioteca Hoy/Your Library Today (TBH) is the name for Denver Public Library's (DPL) programming effort that targets new immigrants and economically and educationally disadvantaged residents. TBH offers practical programs like English Language Learning (ELL), computer instruction, GED, and citizenship study groups and makes materials available in the library to support these programs. TBH also sponsors cultural activities for kids when the adult programs are taking place so that lack of child care is not an obstacle for parents wanting to attend programs.

The goal of TBH is to help adults obtain the skills and knowledge they need to engage in civic life in the Denver community and succeed in supporting themselves and raising their families. Three years into the project we are seeing great success with lively, well-attended programs and participants giving positive feedback about what they have gained.

## Background

Hispanic population growth in the last two decades has made a big impact in Denver as it has in many cities throughout the country. Programs for Hispanics began informally at least a decade ago in various branches in DPL's system. Pilar Castro-Reino, current manager of the branches offering TBH programs, remembers: "We noticed a lot of the mothers in our communities did not speak English well and lacked confidence to use all the wonderful materials in our branches. We brainstormed and decided to try English conversation circles





in the afternoon. Kids were welcome. The programs were fun for participants and gave them added confidence in their English skills.”<sup>1</sup> Similar experiments were going on in other DPL branches, too. Castro-Reino remembers those as creative and fun times as DPL staff tried to reach out to and engage these newcomers.

In 2003, DPL administrators began a comprehensive needs assessment. With census data analysis, library use studies, and focus group responses they identified a need for more library programs aimed at new immigrants. The effort that became TBH was formally launched in seven of DPL’s twenty-two branches in fall 2004. The branches selected are in neighborhoods with high percentages of households where Spanish is spoken in the home or in economically at-risk neighborhoods. The effort started with English programs, GED study groups, life skills topics, citizenship workshops, and some concurrent children’s activities so that parents could attend programs.

With this pilot underway, DPL began to look for community partners who would be interested in applying for an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) National Leadership Grant for Advanced Learning Communities to expand the programming effort. DPL is fortunate to have two museum neighbors who were excited to collaborate with us—the Denver Art Museum and Museo de las Americas. Applying for an IMLS grant is time-consuming. The application requires detailed descriptions of needs assessment; impact and intended results; project design and evaluation plan; budget, personnel, and management plan; and plans for dissemination and sustainability. Castro-Reino remembers how complex it was to apply:

We had to pull together a lot of information about our institution, our plans, and how they fit with our collaborators. It was a challenge to coordinate and synthesize all the required pieces. Luckily, DPL’s recent community conversations and surveys had produced information that helped demonstrate our need and we were able to show how the TBH plan could really help our communities.<sup>2</sup>

The generous IMLS grant awarded to DPL and partners in 2006 enabled us to expand and enrich the TBH programs. Since then many newcomers to Denver have gained confidence in using English, learned about community resources, acquired computer skills, and studied for GED or citizenship tests at their local libraries. Through the museum partner-

ships, children have participated in cultural enrichment activities while their parents attend programs.

Lucia Gonzalez, a student attending Hampden’s ELL II class, says she is already more comfortable speaking English compared to when she moved to Denver earlier this year. She has been living in America since 2001 and recently came to Denver from Texas. She commends her ELL instructor, Alice Espinosa, because “it feels so good to have a person to talk to and explain all my questions.”<sup>3</sup> Her goal for the year is to utilize verbs correctly so that she can ultimately become a reporter for an English-language newspaper.

## Description of Programs

Through the TBH grant, DPL serves Denver’s growing population of Spanish-speaking adults with limited English language skills. The bilingual adult education programs made possible by the TBH grant are:

- beginning English Language Learning (ELL I);
- intermediate English Language Learning (ELL II);
- computer instruction;
- children’s concurrent enrichment activity;
- Your Life workshops that include citizenship preparation and other life skills topics; and
- GED study sessions.

The programs are geared toward a section of the population that may be difficult to attract because of obstacles they experience in the effort to continue their education. The TBH program aims to reach:

- the self-directed learner;
- the working adult whose schedule conflicts with a more formal class;
- participants already taking traditional language acquisition classes but needing practice in conversation skills;
- illiterate participants who may not qualify for more structured language acquisition programs;
- participants with varied educational backgrounds and experience;
- parents and caregivers who appreciate programs that offer activities for their children at the same time; or
- students supplementing a traditional GED class.

Offering the children’s cultural enrichment programs at the same time as the adult programs makes it convenient for immigrant families to come to the library together and access the many services that it



# Offering the children's cultural enrichment programs at the same time as the adult programs makes it convenient for immigrant families to come to the library together.

offers. No registration is required and new participants are always welcome.

With the TBH grant, DPL is able to offer an average of forty-five programs per week to serve newcomers and language learners in the city of Denver. An essential part of the adult programs includes how to acquire a library card, how to check out materials, letting participants know library materials can be borrowed free of charge and must be returned, why late fines are charged, and an introduction to other library use practices and policies. Our goal is to promote information literacy at every step of our programming.

## ELL Programs

The ELL program includes two levels—English I for practicing basic grammar and vocabulary and English II for practicing conversation skills in an informal classroom setting. These English programs are more than an introduction to American language and culture; they are also a human connection to the world of libraries and learning. We want to include and encourage illiterate students who might not qualify for more structured language acquisition classes to participate in these programs.

The philosophy we've adopted in offering ELL is to allow participants to relax and build their confidence with each program. ELL is not only for Spanish speakers, but also for anyone who wants to improve their English speaking skills. Students come to us from countries around the world including Mexico, Columbia, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Russia, Poland, Turkey, Ethiopia, Somalia, Iraq, and many others. Each of DPL's six TBH locations offers one hour per week of ELL at each level. Instructors have been recruited from local institutions and through word-of-mouth and are paid via grant funds. The curriculum is largely decided by the instructor based on participants' priorities.

## Computer Instruction

Programs in computer instruction were added to the TBH roster in the fall of 2007 with the installa-

tion of wireless Internet and the purchase of fifteen laptops per location. We created a list of practical computer skills and then developed a series of six computer sessions. The series is continuous: after the sixth week of computer instruction the series begins anew. The six sessions cover the following general topics: Introduction to Mouse and Computer for Beginners, Documents, E-mail I and II, Internet I and II. Computer programs are taught by grant-paid instructors with additional assistants to help. Computer programs are held for one hour per week at each location.

## GED Workshops

GED workshops target adult participants aiming to pass the GED test, but lacking the time and resources to attend a traditional GED course. GED participants include stay-at-home moms, students unable to commit to a more intensive course, learners who lack test-taking experience, and individuals who plan to study on their own. The workshops offer non-traditional adult learners exposure to the GED test subjects, practice in basic study skills, and the opportunity to ask questions in a non-intimidating, casual setting. As with the ELL programs, GED workshops are bilingual (English and Spanish) but appropriate for immigrants from other countries and for other adult learners. TBH locations provide one hour of GED workshop per week, led by an instructor who is paid via grant funds.

## Life Skills Workshops

Life Skills workshops are bilingual presentations on a variety of topics such as money management, citizenship, career advancement, health, and nutrition. Originally, library staff presented these programs on various subjects. The TBH grant enabled us to hire business owners and other professionals to act as partners in providing these programs. Life Skills workshops are provided by experts such as real estate agents, mortgage brokers, bankers, insurance agents, financial advisors, nurses, doctors, police officers, computer experts, human resource professionals,



and job coaches. Recent classes have included how to purchase a house, plan healthy meals, start a business, stop smoking, write a résumé, search for a job, study for the citizenship test, how to help children succeed in school, general health topics, personal safety, and money management. Generous community partnerships allow for a great variety of presentations and presenters.

## Children's Programs

We offer children's programs in partnership with the Denver Art Museum and the Museo de las Americas. The children's programs occur simultaneously with the TBH English, GED, and computer programs. In this way, DPL strives to reduce the child care barrier for our learners so parents can participate while their child attends an activity. These free programs for children include bilingual crafts, stories, and activities to promote literacy, art, and culture.

Each children's concurrent program begins with a bilingual storytime and continues with a craft or other activity. Enriched arts and crafts programs introduce local artists who focus on culturally connected crafts such as piñatas, Guatemalan worry dolls, Mexican "papel picado," or Chinese New Year dragons. The emphasis for every concurrent children's program is a literacy tie-in that connects the books to the interactive craft that follows. Each location has two to four children's programs per week, depending on how that location schedules its other TBH programs. Children's programs are led by a museum employee and assisted by grant-paid craft assistants.

## Family Literacy

Family literacy and education is one of the most important factors in determining academic success. Parents who bring their children to the library show their children that education and learning is valuable. The result of parents attending adult programs in a library is that their children are also exposed to books, to reading, and to experiencing the public library as a fun, educational, and interactive environment. This creates a connection between these individuals and families and the library. They may discover not only a resource for books and materials, but also a resource for enhancing their lives through human connection and the power of literacy.

In the third year of the TBH grant, we've been experimenting with the family literacy concept through a program format we've named the

Community Learning Plaza (CLP). Branches get out the laptop computers and transform their meeting rooms into a space in which all members of the family can learn together, working on a variety of TBH-related topics: English, computer skills, homework, citizenship, GED, and test practice. The plaza is staffed by a DPL staff member and a grant-paid instructor who are able to answer questions and show the participants great online resources and library reference materials to help with their projects. The plazas have been well received and attendance is going up each week in most branches.

## Lessons Learned

Surveys and statistics show that most participants appreciate TBH programs and feel they have benefited. Attendance at programs has increased with each year that has passed. Surveys analyzed by our independent research group, Omni Institute, show a high level of satisfaction with the programs. A common comment is "Please offer more classes during the week."

Our observations and feedback from participants have encouraged us to try new things each semester. For example, during the past two years of TBH programming we have observed that many immigrant families enjoy working and learning together. Although the TBH programs were originally conceived as separate programs for adults and children, we know that research shows that family literacy and learning activities are popular and benefit all family members. Last semester we offered the new pilot program, CLP, for families to attend together to work on English and educational activities. CLP was so successful that we are expanding it.

Successful programming can disrupt other library services in buildings lacking thoughtfully designed meeting spaces separate from the quiet study and service desks of the library. In some of DPL's TBH branches the end of the evening programs means lots of adults and kids spilling out of the meeting rooms right into the checkout area. Anyone thinking of implementing a program like TBH will want to consider ways to minimize any possible disruptive impact of programming on other library activities.

Offering TBH programs in six diverse libraries has shown us the need to have some flexibility in local implementation to get the most out of the programs. Resources can be used most efficiently when local branches are able to pick the types of programs, materials, and schedules most needed in their neighborhoods instead of trying to find one strict set of



programs to implement in several locations. Spanish language materials are expensive. A thoughtful and judicious approach to collection development is required so that materials bought are both useful and will be used. This is another area where local advice can help with wise use of limited resources.

Laptop computers add flexibility and expand opportunities for programming, but they also require special care, maintenance, and upkeep. Be sure to consider this in your projected budget. Equipment bought outside the regular library budget may be hard to support after grant funding runs out and may be impossible to replace when it no longer works.

It is hard to overcome some people's distrust of government institutions and lack of knowledge about libraries. Outreach and networking in the neighborhood and with nonprofits and city organizations that serve the target group is important in getting the word out about your programs. Alliances made now may pay off in years to come.

## Conclusion

TBH has brought lively programs to these six DPL branch libraries. TBH programs have helped newcomers settle into their new city and start to make successful and fulfilling lives. The programs require support and extra effort from all staff at these branches, but staff members enjoy the rewards. There is real satisfaction in helping people find confidence and tools to begin making their dreams come true. ■

## References

1. Pilar Castro-Reino, Manager of Language and Learning Branches for Denver Public Library, personal interview with authors, January 2009.
2. Ibid.
3. Lucia Gonzalez at the Hampden Branch Library, personal interview with the authors, April 2007.

### Nancy Pearl @ PLA 2010

You'll have a couple of opportunities to attend Nancy Pearl programming at PLA 2010. Pearl is presenting a preconference program on Tuesday, March 23, from 2 to 5:30 p.m. and also will host her popular Book Buzz event on Wednesday, March 24, from 10:30 a.m. to Noon.

Pearl's preconference program is entitled "Opening Doors, Opening Books: Providing Effective Readers' Advisory Service." Participants will learn how to effectively match readers with the right books by applying the concept of "doorways" in suggesting reading material. The session will focus on defining, identifying, and using doorways in readers' advisory interviews, and will discuss how mood and motivation affect whether or not a reader will enjoy a particular book. Also, attendees will hear tips on how to grow their knowledge of books, and how to conquer "desk paralysis." Preconference programs require a separate registration fee; you can get more information and register at [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org).

Also, plan to join Pearl and representatives from top publishing companies at PLA's Book Buzz, as they talk about some of the best upcoming books. This session is open to all registered conference attendees.

Visit [www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org) for complete PLA 2010 information. ■







**JULIE ELLIOTT** is Assistant Librarian and Reference/Coordinator of Public Relations and Outreach, Indiana University South Bend; jmfelli@iusb.edu.

Julie is reading *The Death of Bunny Munro* by Nick Cave.

**JULIE ELLIOTT**, “By the Book” contributing editor since 2005, is leaving *Public Libraries* to pursue other personal and professional activities. We at *PL* express our gratitude to Julie and wish her success in her future endeavors. Julie will remain a part of the *PL* team as a reviewer.

**CINDY LOMBARDO**, public services administrator for Cleveland Public Library, will take over as “By the Book” contributing editor with the January/February 2010 issue. If you are interested in reviewing, contact Cindy at cindy.lombardo@cpl.org. If you would like to submit books for review, please send them to Cindy Lombardo, Cleveland Public Library, 325 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114. Welcome aboard, Cindy!

“By the Book” reviews professional development materials of potential interest to public librarians, trustees, and others involved in library service. Public Library Association policy dictates that PLA publications not be reviewed in this column. Notice of new publications from PLA will generally be found in the “News from PLA” section of *Public Libraries*. A description of books written by the editors or contributing editors of *Public Libraries* may appear in this column but no evaluative review will be included for these titles.

### The Guy-Friendly YA Library: Serving Male Teens

By *Rollie James Welch*. Westport, Conn.: *Libraries Unlimited*, 2007. 196p. \$40 (ISBN-13: 978-1-59158-270-0; ISBN-10: 1-59158-270-9) LC 2006102882.

Do you want to make your library more accessible to male users, specifically male teenagers? *The Guy-Friendly YA Library: Serving Male Teens*, which is part of the *Libraries Unlimited Professional Guides for Young Adult Librarians* series, gives helpful tips for reaching out to this traditionally underserved portion of the library-using population. Rollie James Welch writes from years of experience working with teens in school and public libraries, and challenges librarians and administrators to investigate what draws male teens to a library, evaluate how their library is doing reaching them, and develop a plan to promote the library to this demographic.

Written primarily for YA librarians, this book provides practical information on understanding the nature of teen males, including their feelings, physical development, interests, and reading choices, and demonstrates how these preferences can be used to enhance library services to these users. Welch provides

excellent reading lists for middle school and high school males, and describes how to interact with teen advisory boards, administrators, and school personnel. He even discusses how to promote library materials to these users and arrange teen spaces to better meet their needs.

The content in this book is important for any librarian working with today's teens and is presented in a way that engages the emotions and is easy to understand. Although most of the works cited by this author and the recommended titles for teen males come from the last decade and first half of this decade, the information is still valid. Recommended for librarians wanting to reach out to male teens.—*Sarah Hammershaimb, Adult Services Librarian, West Chicago (Ill.) Public Library District*

### Fantasy Authors: A Research Guide

By *Jen Stevens and Dorothea Salo*. Westport, Conn.: *Libraries Unlimited*, 2008. 241p. \$45 (ISBN-13: 978-1-59158-497-1) LC 2007044970.

This book, part of the *Author Research* series, is intended to be a reference work and research guide for students, teachers, and researchers to learn about fantasy authors

and gain greater understanding and deeper appreciation of the genre. It is also designed as a readers' advisory tool for librarians to assist their clients in selecting fantasy authors or books. In addition, the book can be a helpful tool for librarians in collection development on fantasy. For fantasy fans, it is a fun and joyful experience to browse through the book, learn about new authors and titles, and become reacquainted with familiar authors.

Fantasy, one of the oldest of the literary genres, can mean many things to different writers and readers. Some writers draw on fairy tales or mystic materials; others develop their own mythologies or view fantasy as a subset of science fiction. Other writers follow high fantasy tradition with a medieval setting. However, for the scope of the book, Stevens and Salo focus on contemporary and historical fantasy writers who incorporate magic and supernatural powers in their books. Their emphasis is on writers with current and growing popularity with an impact on the genre. They have identified and grouped fantasy writers into nine types: (1) early writers, (2) fairy tales/myth, (3) feminist, (4) high fantasy/sword and sorcery, (5) humorous/satirical, (6) non-European themes and motifs, (7) shared worlds, (8) urban fantasy, and (9) young adult/children's.

To further facilitate using the book, they give several helpful lists, guides, and background information. The fantasy timeline is particularly valuable to researchers who require fundamental knowledge in the historical aspects of fantasy. Each of the seven periods includes the names of prominent writers, significant literary works with publication date, and important world events with occurring date.

A list of one hundred leading fantasy authors arranged in alphabetical order constitutes the heart of the book. These author entries contain a wealth of useful print and online information, including the author's biographical sketches, major works, and research resources. In addition, the author's websites are also offered as part of the research resources, thus students or scholars have the freedom to select from various sources the specific type or level of resources that they need.

The book is well-researched and well-organized. As experienced college librarians, Stevens and Salo have obviously spent thousands of hours conducting research, searching, and gathering information from numerous sources to make this book a fine research guide for fantasy authors. Recommended for school, public, and college libraries.—*Shu-Hsien Chen, retired faculty member of GLIS Queens (N.Y.) College*

### Radio Frequency Identification Handbook for Librarians

*By Connie K. Haley, Lynn A. Jacobsen, and Shai Robkin. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 166p. \$45 (ISBN-13: 978-1-59158-374-4) LC 2006032396.*

The use of RFID technology for library circulation and security systems continues to expand. Librarians who have adopted RFID systems often describe the staff time that self-checkout or automated check-out/check-in can save, and the self-service aspect of RFID suits the increasing numbers of library users who are comfortable checking out their own groceries, pumping their own gas, and using ATMs for bank transactions. The three authors

of the *Radio Frequency Identification Handbook for Librarians* represent public and academic libraries as well as an RFID system vendor. Because all three authors have been through the process of selection and implementation of RFID systems, they bring a practical, task-based approach to the topic.

Though the basic concepts of how RFID technology works are covered, the book is clearly focused on library applications for RFID. Each step of the process of RFID system implementation is included, from component selection to vendor selection to tagging the collection. A list of questions to ask RFID vendors will help librarians craft an RFP without missing any key questions, and an illustrated guide to RFID tagging library collections will be of great assistance to staff who are supervising retrospective conversion projects. While there is no substitute for visiting a library that is using RFID systems as part of the decision-making process, the description of the various components available for RFID circulation, security, and inventory is a helpful supplement.

While the authors believe strongly in the relevance and usefulness of RFID in libraries of all types, they do provide a summary of common concerns that library users and staff may have with RFID systems, including a lengthy section on privacy and RFID. It would have been very easy for the authors to gloss over the privacy concerns in favor of the positive aspects of RFID, but they carefully address the issue and provide intelligent, well-reasoned responses, as well as suggestions for ways to maintain libraries' commitment to patron privacy while implementing this potentially time- and money-saving technology.

This practical, clearly written guide will be helpful for librarians who are considering RFID systems for their institutions.—*Nanette Donohue, Technical Services Manager, Champaign (Ill.) Public Library*

### Fluent in Fantasy: The Next Generation

By Diana Tixier Herald and Bonnie Kunzel. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 312p. \$52 (ISBN-13: 978-1-59158-198-7; ISBN-10: 1-59158-198-2) LC 2007028840.

Part of the Genreflecting Advisory series, *Fluent in Fantasy: The Next Generation* is the updated version of *Fluent in Fantasy: A Guide to Reading Interests* (1999), and emphasizes fantasy titles that have been published or reissued in the last decade.

Beginning with an informative and well-organized introduction that defines fantasy fiction, and describes the importance of the genre and recent trends within it, *Fluent in Fantasy* provides librarians and readers with the tools they need to find the next fantasy book they want.

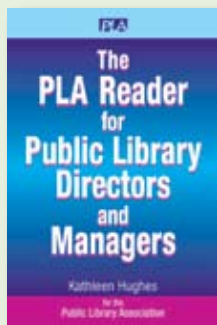
This book is divided into fourteen chapters, thirteen of which cover subgenres of fantasy fiction including epic fantasy, time travel, fairy tales, and alternate and parallel worlds. Each chapter begins with a description of the subgenre and has a graphic that captures the essence of that subgenre, which is used throughout the chapter. Authors are listed alphabetically within each section, and series are listed in series order. Each title has publication information and a short summary. Award-winners, titles that would interest teens, and media

adaptations are also noted.


The final chapter in the book provides a wealth of resources, both print and electronic, for those who want to learn more about the genre. Appendixes follow, and cover humorous titles and those that have won various awards.

With the rise in popularity of fantasy titles and the appeal of the genre to all age groups, public librarians and high school library media specialists need a way to keep track of these books that are important to their library's users. *Fluent in Fantasy: The Next Generation* is an excellent, user-friendly resource for librarians that provides pertinent information on fantasy titles for all readers.—*Sarah Hammershaimb, Adult Services Librarian, West Chicago (Ill.) Public Library District* 

### The PLA Reader for Public Library Directors and Managers Now Available



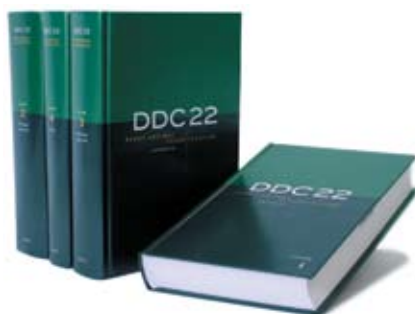
Specifically designed to accommodate the frantic pace of the busy public library professional, the first title in this new series from PLA provides clear and accessible insight into the most relevant topics and complex challenges in the library world today. *The PLA Reader's* collected writings span the gamut of hot topics and challenges facing today's library directors and managers. Chapter coverage includes: advocacy basics, tips for retaining high-performing employees, improving directorship, library communication, intellectual freedom matters, reference services, technological applications, and more.

*The PLA Reader* (ISBN-13: 978-1-55570-684-5) is \$65. To order, call (866) NS-BOOKS or visit [www.neal-schuman.com](http://www.neal-schuman.com). 

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*The Dewey Decimal Classification is published by OCLC. Image: © Corbis*





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The contributing editor of this column is **VICKI NESTING**, Assistant Director at the St. Charles Parish Library, Louisiana. Submissions may be sent to her at 21 River Park Dr., Hahnville, LA 70057; [vnestin@bellsouth.net](mailto:vnestin@bellsouth.net).

Vicki is reading *Grave Goods* by Ariana Franklin, *Gone Tomorrow* by Lee Child, and *Sandman Slim* by Richard Kadrey.

The following are extracted from press releases and vendor announcements and are intended for reader information only. The appearance of such notices herein does not constitute an evaluation or an endorsement of the products or services by the Public Library Association or the editors of this magazine.

### Tutor.com Introduces New Learning Suite to Better Serve Students and Adults

[www.tutor.com](http://www.tutor.com)

Tutor.com recently launched the new Tutor.com Learning Suite to thousands of libraries, corporations, colleges, and schools across the country. The expanded product suite includes services for K–12 students, college students, and adults who are returning to school or job searching. Along with its signature Live Homework Help program, students of any age can now obtain real-time writing assistance and résumé help using the ProofPoint Real Time Writing Center and access to vetted resources in the 24/7 SkillsCenter Resource Library.

The Adult Career Center includes one-to-one help designed for adults who are conducting a job search and need help with résumé strategies as well as writing a résumé or polishing a cover letter. Adults may also access the new SkillsCenter 24/7 to find résumé guidelines, job search guidance, and interview tips.

Beyond job search, the Adult Career Center will help students preparing for the GED or going back to school with one-to-one assistance in math, science, social studies, and English. Adults getting ready for the citizenship test may connect to a social studies or English tutor to

prepare for that test or use resources from the SkillsCenter to find practice exams and learn how to register for the test.

### TLC Debuts Library Software for Kids

[www.tlcdelivers.com](http://www.tlcdelivers.com)

The Library Corporation (TLC) has developed LS2 Kids—the children's version of TLC's LS2 PAC. LS2 Kids was developed with input from librarians as well as children ages five to eleven.

LS2 Kids is simple, intuitive, and playful. It features Scout, the curious young pup who greets users and guides them as they search for items of interest in the library. Kids can click on an icon in the category wheel that encircles Scout or they can type a book name or subject in the search box. If a word is typed incorrectly, LS2 Kids will offer spelling suggestions and corrections.

When children search for subjects, names, or book titles, LS2 Kids takes them to an interactive screen that displays a cover flow of corresponding book jackets that fill the screen and indicate whether a title is available. Clicking on any book jacket spins that title around to reveal detailed information about the publication.

## Moderro Solution for Libraries

[www.moderro.com](http://www.moderro.com)

Moderro Xpack is a miniature computer that was built specifically for public areas. The Xpack CPU is a small (paperback-size), low power, silent mini-computer. It weighs around three pounds and consumes on average thirteen watts of power. Xpack comes with custom-designed keyboard and mouse, Ethernet CAT5 and VGA cables, and mounting hardware. The CPU can be placed in a cradle that can stand alongside the monitor, or be attached to the back of the monitor using the VESA bracket (included).

The unit comes with optional WiFi connectivity. CPU speed and RAM are configured appropriately for the usage. The keyboard has a built-in USB hub, which provides left or right-side mouse connection and USB media storage drive slot. Xpack is a solid state device, meaning that there are no moving parts (aside from a back-up fan) inside the enclosure.

Moderro Xpack is powered by Moderro Browser OS. This innovative OS is built to provide a "desktop-in-a-browser" environment, giving the users a familiar feel of the desktop when interacting with Internet resources and applications.

## Sony Reader and OverDrive Sign Library Marketing Agreement

[www.overdrive.com](http://www.overdrive.com)  
[www.sony.com/reader](http://www.sony.com/reader)

OverDrive announced a joint marketing agreement with Sony Electronics, developer of the Sony

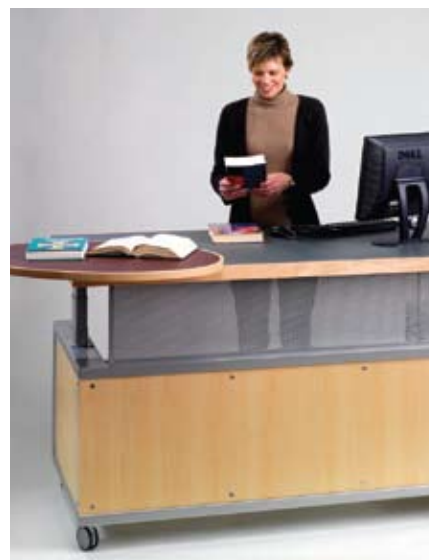
Reader Digital Book. OverDrive and Sony will cross-market OverDrive's library network and the Reader, an e-book device that is compatible with industry standard e-book formats offered by libraries.

Thousands of libraries in the OverDrive network offer e-books compatible with the Sony Reader. Users simply browse or search their library website, check out their selected e-book with a valid library card, and download to a PC. Once downloaded, the e-book may then be transferred to the Sony Reader via free Adobe Digital Editions software.

## DEMCO Offers Mobile Reference Desk

[www.demcointeriors.com](http://www.demcointeriors.com)

The new TechnoLink Mobile Reference Desk is designed to link technology and furniture effortlessly. This desk offers height adjustment, wire management, locking casters, and a spacious work surface that can adapt easily to different users and equipment.



## ConsumerReportsHealth.org Readex Launches American Newspaper Archives

[www.newsbank.com](http://www.newsbank.com)

Readex, a division of NewsBank, announced the launch of American Newspaper Archives, an expanding online collection that will offer access to major U.S. newspapers. A part of America's Historical Newspapers, the archives will provide users with fully searchable digital editions of historically significant and regionally diverse publications from the nineteenth century through the 1990s.

American Newspaper Archives will provide regional perspectives and reporting on crucial conflicts from the War of 1812 to the Gulf War, movements ranging from women's suffrage to civil rights, scientific and medical advances, noteworthy people, natural disasters, political campaigns, and much more. Each title is available individually, and all are cross-searchable via an integrated interface that allows users to easily view, magnify, print, and save digital page images.

## Now Available to Libraries from EBSCOhost

[www.ebsco.com](http://www.ebsco.com)

Through a distribution partnership between Consumers Union (CU) and EBSCO Publishing (EBSCO), libraries can now subscribe to ConsumerReportsHealth.org for a fixed annual subscription. The resource will be available alongside all other EBSCOhost databases so authentication and entry points are seamless and consistent.

ConsumerReportsHealth.org includes:

- ratings on products to support healthy living;
- treatment ratings on more than two hundred common conditions;
- information for consumers and their doctors on prescription drug choices based on effectiveness, safety, and price;
- the most current information and effectiveness ratings for natural medicines, herbs, vitamins, and nutritional supplements;
- resources to help you find a doctor and learn ways to maintain the best doctor-patient relationship;
- information on choosing a hospital and comparing your choices;
- advice on how to ensure a safe hospital stay and how to make sense of your hospital bill once you are discharged; and
- what to look for in a health plan and how they are rated.

### Vocera Communications Systems from 3M

[www.3M.com](http://www.3M.com)

The Vocera communications system enables instant wireless voice communications that users control with naturally spoken commands. This easy-to-use system is ideal for libraries where staff members need to stay in contact in order to provide a higher level of patron service.

The wearable communication device is 4.2" x 1.4" and weighs less than two ounces. It can easily be clipped to a shirt pocket or worn on a lanyard. It enables two-way voice communication without the need

to remember a phone number or manipulate a handset.

### Alexander Street's American History in Video

[www.alexanderstreet.com](http://www.alexanderstreet.com)

American History in Video is a rich, online collection that includes more than a thousand titles and is continuously growing, with complete videos and synchronized, scrolling, searchable transcripts. American History in Video offers the complete online newsreel streams of United News and Universal Newsreel; important documentaries and series from The History Channel, PBS, and others; and archival footage.

### Free Online Career Resource from Glassdoor

[www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)

Glassdoor is a free online career resource for libraries that gives users an inside look at more than 26,000 employers. Glassdoor is offering special links to libraries and career centers so patrons can see all the information for free. Hundreds of career centers have added links.

### Harlequin Launches New Teen Series

[www.harlequinsalesgroup.com/harlequinteen/index.html](http://www.harlequinsalesgroup.com/harlequinteen/index.html)


In August 2009, Harlequin Teen was launched with new novels from

*New York Times* best-selling authors Rachel Vincent and Gena Showalter. This new line will offer authentic new fiction for the teen reader who loves to escape beneath the covers of a great read. The range of genres will include contemporary, paranormal, fantasy, sci-fi, historical, and, of course, some romance.

### In My Book Wholesale Shop for Libraries and Friends

[www.inmybook.com/imb2w](http://www.inmybook.com/imb2w)

For libraries that have a library or Friends store or booksale, or are selling book-related merchandise at the circulation desk, In My Book cards may be resold as fundraisers for the library. The In My Book website has a special wholesalers section that welcomes libraries and Friends groups.

In My Book cards (the greeting card and bookmark in one) are printed on heavy-duty watercolor paper and feature drawings by book illustrator Meredith Hamilton. They are sold complete with a red envelope for mailing. The cards recycle from greeting card to bookmark (they perforate), and as such are a long-lasting reminder of the giver. Fifteen styles begin with the greeting "In my book. . ." and conclude with such sentiments as "you're novel," "you're the last word," and "you're top shelf." 



## Make Time in Your PLA 2010 Schedule to Visit the Exhibits

Find new products, ideas, and solutions for your library in the PLA Exhibits Hall. Browse more than eight hundred booths and see the latest in publications, media, technology, equipment, services, and supplies. Plan to attend the Exhibits Opening Reception at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, immediately following the PLA Opening General Session.

## Getting Around Portland

To get acquainted with the city, take MAX from the airport. MAX light rail is quick and inexpensive with trains departing every fifteen minutes during peak hours. PLA volunteers will be at baggage claims to hand out tickets and answer questions. Travel time to the convention center is approximately thirty minutes (forty minutes to downtown). For additional public transportation options, consult the Trip Planner ([www.trimet.org](http://www.trimet.org)). Taxis into downtown are approximately \$30 to \$35.

Given the ease and convenience of the MAX light rail system, PLA will not be providing shuttle service. Portland's award-winning light rail system is one of the best in the country. This thirty-eight-mile network of rails extends both east and west from downtown Portland and the Oregon Convention Center. Best of all, Portland's mass transit buses, light rail, and streetcars are free in a 330-square block area known as "Fareless Square." A great convenience for PLA attendees, this fare-free zone includes both downtown hotels and the convention centers.

Be sure to take a look at the PLA conference website ([www.placonference.org](http://www.placonference.org)) for additional local information including attractions, restaurants, and more. 

### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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### EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION

("Average" figures denote the average number of copies printed each issue during the previous twelve months. "Actual" figures denote actual numbers of copies of single issue published nearest to the filing date—July/August 2009 issue.) Total number of copies printed: Average, 12,139; Actual, 11,654. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other paid distribution outside USPS: Average: 345; Actual: 317. Total paid and/or requested circulation: Average, 11,492; Actual, 10,591. Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means, samples, complimentary and other free copies: Average, 250; Actual, 646. Total distribution: Average, 11,742; Actual, 11,237. Copies not distributed: office use, leftover, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: Average, 397; Actual, 417. Total (previous two entries): Average, 12,139; Actual, 11,654.

## Index to Advertisers

ALA-PPO .....	30	NEH.....	30
ALA-APA.....	18, 28	OCLC.....	51
Baker & Taylor.....	back cover	PLA .....	inside front cover, 19, 52, inside back cover
The Book House.....	8	San José State University .....	5
IMLS .....	12		



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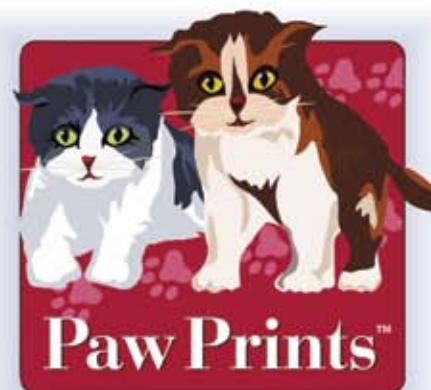
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