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Dear readers:

I hope you are finding time to enjoy your summer. It often seems that the library world kicks into high gear during the summertime, with reading programs, activities, and other projects to engage vacationing patrons who have increased time on their hands. Check out “Not Just for the Kids” on page 7 to read about one library’s innovative summer program. We’d love to hear about any particularly successful summer event (or even a dismal failure) your library might have hosted this year. Query me at khughes@ala.org for more information about writing for PL. This issue also provides some food for thought on other library matters—is your self-service-holds area open to the public? Stacey Bowers presents a case for why maybe it shouldn’t be, in “Self-Service Holds: A Violation of Library Patrons’ Privacy.” Curious about how new Americans might be using your library? Check out Susan Burke’s “Public Library Resources Used by Immigrant Households” on page 32, and for a consideration of the use of competencies, check out Connie Van Fleet and June Lester’s “Is Anyone Listening?” on page 42.

Finally, as you may have heard, PLA is developing a new website to support the transition of committees to Communities of Practice (CoPs), read more about it on page 4. I hope you’ll join us in PLAspace! We’d love to have your input on this exciting new project.

Kathleen M. Hughes
Editor
khughes@ala.org

Kathleen is reading The Heretic’s Daughter by Kathleen Kent and Beautiful Boy: A Father’s Journey through His Son’s Addiction by David Sheff.
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News from PLA

PLAspace Development on Schedule
PLAspace is the new website designed to support the transition of PLA committees to Communities of Practice (CoPs) and will be a fundamental part of how the association supports them. Development work on PLAspace.org proceeds on schedule. PLAspace communities will allow for better collaboration between members, without requiring face-to-face meetings, and allow for greater participation among our members and nonmembers. PLAspace is expected to become a tool which supports a more nimble and responsive organization.

Users will notice many common social networking and interactive tools including blogs, forums, chat, an events calendar, a custom projects module (which will allow CoP members to coordinate project management), and file storage and archives. PLAspace is being developed so that future technologies and functions can be incorporated as they become available. PLA is also exploring methods of synchronous communication, such as videoconferencing.

PLAspace is part of an integrated Web plan for PLA, which includes revitalizing PLA.org to complement the new ALA.org site design launching on September 1; a new initiative to make all PLA forms and registrations Web-based and paperless by the end of the year; and participation in the ALAConnect site later this fall.

PLAspace.org is scheduled to have a mini-launch August 18 with three CoPs: Technology, Readers Advisory, and Cataloging. Within a month we will begin rolling out other CoPs.

We have already received notices of intent to transition from the following committees: Branch Libraries, Small and Medium Libraries, and Advocacy. If you would like to transition an existing committee, join a CoP, or form a new CoP, contact Doug Dawson, PLA Web manager, at ddawson@ala.org.

More information on PLAspace development can be found at http://pla.org/ala/pla/cop.cfm. A notice will be sent to all PLA members when the site has launched and is open for participation.

2009 PLA Spring Symposium
The PLA Spring Symposium will be held April 2–4, 2009 in Nashville, Tennessee, at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel, 611 Commerce Street. The symposium features an opening session on Thursday evening and concurrent one-and-a-half day workshops on Friday and Saturday. Programs include:

Everyday Library Ethics: How the Right Thing is the Better Thing for Your Library and Community
Presenter: Pat Wagner, management consultant, Denver

Library ethics is how you make and execute decisions, and treat people, every day. Learn how ethics impacts customer service and succession planning as well as finances, community outreach, and your credibility with political and economic decision-makers. Fair-minded choices can build trust, respect, and support for your library.

Service Responses: Selecting and Implementing the Right Mix for Your Library
Presenters: Sandra Nelson, consultant, Nashville; June Garcia, consultant, Denver

Can your library provide all of the services your residents want? Of course not! Learn how to use the PLA Service Responses in Strategic Planning for Results (ALA Editions, 2008) to identify activities, build responsive collections, and create dynamic spaces that will enable you to provide the quality services your customers need.

Silk Purses and Sow’s Ears?
Assessing the Quality of Public Library Statistics and Making the Most of Them
Presenters: Keith Lance, library educator/consultant, Denver; Joe Matthews, coordinator, Executive MLIS Program, San Jose (Calif.) State University-SLIS; Larry Nash White, MLS program director, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina

Public library staff and managers consistently complain that library statistics are flawed. We spend a lot of time and effort collecting and reporting all sorts of numbers to all sorts of places. Why do we count what? Where does it go? Is any of it...
really valuable in decision making? Learn about the metrics being used and how you can use them correctly from the experts.

Today's Library: From the Inside Out

**Presenters:** Kim Bolan, librarian/consultant/author, Indianapolis; Tim Carl, design architect, and Jane Dedering, library planner and interior designer, Hammel, Green, and Abrahamson, Inc.; Marc Ciccarelli, architect, Studio Techné, Cleveland; Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, deputy director, Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library, Ohio

Librarians often ask themselves, “How can I keep up with the exciting changes going on in the library without money for a new building or a total makeover?” This session will tell you how! The panel will provide practical, how-to examples, ideas, and strategies that have transformed libraries across the country into vibrant centers of their communities. Attendees will learn planning and design lessons from a national consultant; green building tips from a successful architect; and twenty-first-century customer service practices that work!

Libraries Connect in the 21st Century

**Presenters:** Andrea Mercado, reference and techie librarian, Reading (Mass.) Public Library; Leonard Souza, president, Acidblue, Ltd., and interactive creative director, Vision Airlines, Las Vegas

This workshop will cover technology issues. Check www.pla.org for an updated program description.

Current Issues: A PLA/CPLA Workshop

*Please Note: Completion of this course can be used as credit toward the Certified Public Library Administrator (CPLA) program, but you do not need to be enrolled in the program to attend the workshop.*

**Presenters:** James McPeak, library practitioner/instructor, Kent (Ohio) State University-SLIS, and motivational speaker; George Needham, vice president, member and community services, OCLC, Columbus, Ohio

This workshop will provide working librarians with the skills and knowledge needed to develop plans for a close integration of the library with the community—to move from “that library and the environment” to “that library in the environment.” The course includes a variety of group exercises based on a case study about a medium-sized county library with multiple branches. Participants will apply what they have learned to their own institutions, identifying, describing, and addressing issues within their communities.

Turning the Page: Building Your Library Community

Developed by PLA with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Turning the Page is an advocacy training program designed to equip librarians and library supporters with the skills, confidence, and resources they need to create community partnerships, build alliances with local and regional decision-makers, and ultimately increase funding for their libraries. This training 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 200 PLA members at the 2009 Spring Symposium.

On the Agenda

**2008**

Results Boot Camp
October 20–24, 2008
Cleveland

**2009**

ALA Midwinter Meeting
January 23–29, 2009
Denver

PLA Spring Symposium
April 2–4, 2009
Nashville

ALA Annual Conference
July 9–15, 2009
Chicago

To get more information about the 2009 PLA Spring Symposium, visit www.pla.org. Online registration opens September 2.

PL to Focus on Community Outreach

Each year, the January/February issue of *Public Libraries (PL)* focuses on a theme. For 2009, the theme is “Community Outreach.” We know this is a broad topic, but we’d like to leave closer interpretation to you! So, now’s your chance to tell the library world about your library’s unique, innovative, or cutting-edge community outreach efforts. We’re looking for feature-length articles and shorter opinion pieces. For submission instructions, visit www.pla.org or send an e-mail to *PL* Editor Kathleen Hughes at khughes@ala.org.
CAROL SHEFFER is Deputy Director, Queens Library, Jamaica, New York; csheffer@queenslibrary.org.

Carol is reading The Dark of Day by Barbara Parker and Ladies of Liberty by Cokie Roberts.

PLA Looks to the Future

Several people have asked me what the theme of my presidential year will be. In the Public Library Association (PLA), we don’t have presidential themes. (I suppose because we work as a team and no single individual sets the agenda.) If there were a theme for this year, though, it would be something like “laying the foundation for the future.”

You have given the PLA board a resounding vote in favor of the structural changes for the organization. Committees which met at ALA Annual Conference were given information about how to become a Community of Practice (CoP). Our Emerging Leaders group did an amazing job of outlining how a CoP would function. Several groups are now working with the PLA office to be the “test” CoPs. The energy, enthusiasm, and excitement surrounding this change are palpable.

The PLA board is also changing. The executive committee of the PLA board met for the final time in Anaheim. Going forward, the full board will meet four times per year. Over the next few years, the board will be reduced in number to its ultimate size. Board members will be even more responsive to the entire membership than they have been in the past, as they are no longer tethered to cluster duties and will each be involved in all board discussions.

In Anaheim, we also announced the PLA Leadership Fellows program. This newest scholarship program offers PLA members who are public library managers an opportunity to attend executive leadership training at some of the best universities in the United States: Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business, and Columbia University Business School. Deadlines for application vary, depending on the university. For those dates and other information, visit www.pla.org.

We have not neglected our fiscal future, either. The board voted at Annual Conference to establish a task force to explore ways to build the PLA endowment by direct contributions and planned giving.

It is an exciting and challenging time for PLA and it is my honor and privilege to serve as your president for this year. Please do not hesitate to contact me at csheffer@queenslibrary.org with questions, comments, or ideas.
Not Just for the Kids
Promoting Library Services through Adult Summer Reading Programs

Mary is reading With No One As Witness by Elizabeth George, People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks, and Hold Tight by Harlan Coben.

Holly is reading Total Constant Order by Crissa-Jean Chappell and Matrimony by Joshua Henkin.

Many library missions describe reaching out to the community and furthering educational needs and lifelong learning. Limits on budgets and staff time make it very difficult for many libraries to plunge into big, splashy summer reading programs. The Salem-South Lyon (Mich.) District Library (SSLDL) has grown a popular summer reading program that succeeds not only on a participation basis, but expands the use and interest in library collections, programming, technology, and other services. Its simplicity makes the program straightforward for both staff and the public, but the best part is that it encompasses all ages from birth to adult.

Creating the Game
There are many clever games that libraries can adapt to summer reading programs. At SSLDL we chose Book Bingo. Using a five-by-five game sheet, the basic idea was to have a player get “bingo” by completing any five tasks in a row, column, or diagonal (see figure 1). Each square requires the player to read something from a particular genre, attend a library program, or use a library computer. This could be expanded to any type of activity that the library might want to feature, such as “read a magazine” or “download an audiobook.” This is the part of the game that offers the most opportunity for promotion and allows for a lot of fun and variety for staff and participants. Over the years, SSLDL has created squares that promote things many adults had never known the library offered until they played Book Bingo. As our services and collections grow and change, we offer different choices on the bingo game sheet.

It is important to make sure nonreaders and non-library users can be successful with the program too. This is an opportunity to hook parents that only come to the library once a year to sign their child up for summer reading. Offer choices on the bingo grid like “check out a DVD or a music CD,” or “attend a library program.” This lets them know at a glance that even if they aren’t big readers they can be successful with the program.

Also, make sure that registration for all age groups happens at the same time and place, so parents don’t need to make an extra trip to the adult department to sign themselves up. This way, children can talk their parents into joining. Kids just love the idea of “I’ll do it if you do,” and it encourages family reading.
Administering the Game

Above all else, the rules of the game should be as minimal and flexible as possible. Adults are often resistant to having “another thing to do.” Flexible rules allow patrons to succeed and feel positive about their library’s services and collections as well as their own success and participation in the program. Overly complicated rules or over-verification of completion takes the fun out of the program and makes it feel like homework. If the program requires adults to read too many books, write full book reviews, log in every time they complete a portion to record it, or get a special stamp from a special desk each time, they just won’t participate. The SSLDL Book Bingo game requires players to draw an “X” on the square when they complete the criteria of that square. That’s it. When they get a bingo, they turn in the game sheet to any service desk in the library. Prize winners are drawn at random from completed bingo sheets. Staff members do not test patrons or check that they really did meet the criteria; we trust that they did their best. (Even if patrons cheat, the prizes are so minimal that they only have their conscience to worry about. See the “Prizes” section that follows.)

It is also crucial to keep the game simple to administer from the staff perspective. At SSLDL, staff members only have to register adults for the program with a very quick and simple form (also available online), collect completed game sheets, and draw prize winners at the end of the summer.

The Goal

The first goal of the program is, as mentioned previously, to promote library collections and services. Book Bingo introduces participants to various genres and services that they might not have been aware of before playing the game.

The second goal is to encourage adults to stretch themselves outside of their comfort zone. Every row on the bingo sheet is carefully designed to include something easy (“read a magazine” or “reader’s choice”) and something a little more difficult.
(“read a bestseller” or “read a fantasy book”). They can concentrate on the items that take more time and effort, but still enjoy the library all summer with the less difficult tasks. If they are not typically fantasy readers, that one option in a row of four easier tasks is the one that will make them stretch.

Third, by participating, adults are demonstrating good reading behavior to children. They are showing kids that reading is a healthy activity, and using the library in various ways is fun. Let’s face it: children are future taxpayers and library supporters. It’s important that parents teach their children to appreciate all the library has to offer. That means parents have to be aware of all the library has to offer as well.

Finally, the adult summer reading program promotes the link between family reading and literacy. One of the squares on the bingo sheet is “read a children’s book.” This allows parents to count on their game sheet the time they spend reading to their children—encouraging them to do so. If their children are older, perhaps in their teens, it encourages parents to read the same books their kids are reading. All of the reading-related squares on the bingo sheet promote literacy, and getting adults to participate in summer reading at the same time as their children encourages literacy at all ages. It also creates a family atmosphere that promotes literacy.

Going back to the idea of keeping the program simple, remember that it is not the regular, disciplined readers—those who read with or without a formal reading program and prizes—that libraries are targeting with summer reading programs. We want to reach those who don’t read or use the library. Ensuring their success is the goal. Designing a game that is more about library discovery and less about reading specific books (or a specific number of books) will actually do more for participation and building a reading community.

Selling the Game
Start with the regulars. They are doing the library thing anyway. Encourage them to sign up and get credit for what they are already doing. The bingo sheet will help regular readers to stretch outside of their usual reading choices and find new genres they may enjoy. Library regulars are library supporters, and they will help you promote the game in the community by word of mouth to their friends and family.

Another way to promote the game and encourage participation is to give promotional talks around the community. Just as children’s librarians visit schools, adult librarians can visit exercise classes, senior centers, or other civic organizations, and include their message in church or bingo announcements.

Staff can promote the game at checkout desks, computer classes, to storytime parents, and during children and teen summer reading program registrations. Promoting the program as a family activity goes a long way, so synchronizing registration and completion dates and locations will help.

Prizes
Prizes at SSLDL include things like coffee mugs with chocolate inside or a $5 gift card to the local coffee or ice cream shop. By stretching our budget into smaller prizes, we are able to have more winners. The librarians have chosen to allocate 20 percent of their annual programming budget to the adult summer reading program. In this way, they can have more events throughout the year and still offer a fun and friendly two-month-long summer reading program for adults. SSLDL is fortunate to have a staff member with a gift for fund-raising, so many of our prizes—T-shirts, window-washing service, car washes, manicures, massages, and more—are donations from local businesses. Participants seem to be more excited about free ice cream or a car wash than they would have been with something fancy or expensive. Just the idea that their name was drawn and they won something is enough. People genuinely get excited about small treats and have fun with the spirit of the game.

Conclusion
Success in an adult summer reading program is ultimately dependent on how you sell it to your public. Keeping the attitude light and fun will go a lot further than a strict game with big prizes. Remind everyone—both participants and staff—that the objective is to stretch their reading muscles and explore new library services and collections. Team up with children’s and teen departments to cross-promote summer reading programs for all ages. This encourages family literacy and the next generation’s interest in the library.
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www.oclc.org
Successful Library Computer Classes

Tips for the New Program Manager

Morris County (N.J.) Library (MCL) has been offering computer classes to the public since the early ’90s. Early classes were conducted at stand-up computers situated in our lobby. When our new building opened in 2000, we offered patrons a state-of-the-art computer lab. It was a hit from the beginning.

In a world where most folks assume everyone has a computer at home and is generally proficient, it’s amazing how many people we frontline librarians encounter everyday who have never used a mouse, don’t understand the difference between the Internet and America Online, or cannot complete online job applications.

When MCL Director Joanne Kares asked me to manage computer classes in the summer of 2006, I was thrilled. Since then, I have learned much, on many levels. For all of you who are now in charge (or may soon be) of public classes in your library, here goes . . .

Teacher Recruitment
Encourage all staff interested in teaching public classes to explore this opportunity for professional and personal growth. Limiting your teaching crew to professional librarians means you may be excluding some of your most talented employees. Work closely with staff members who are not comfortable with public speaking. Some may (eventually) shine.

Quality Control vs. Creative License
Select your teachers carefully and trust them to do a great job. This can be quite the challenge for those of us who are certifiable control freaks. Keep everything in perspective. Program managers are charged with nurturing and growing a service, not teaching all of the classes. Encourage your teachers to use the tools your facility provides and let them experiment. Patrons with different learning styles appreciate a variety of approaches. If a class isn’t
working, you will know from patron evaluations.

Target Audience
If you teach it, they will come. PC basics, e-mail, and Internet introduction classes generally attract seniors. Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint classes attracts everyone from seniors to those reentering the workforce to preteen homeschooled students. Digital photography is interesting to anyone with a digital camera. Clearly state each class’s objectives in promotional material and at the start of each session.

Wiki-riculum?
“Your classes are nothing like anything I’ve ever taken before,” remarked one patron recently. You bet! Our patrons’ suggestions determine class content and course offerings. Comments from our Word I class were used to create Word II, Word III, and Easy, Breezy Posters.

What’s Hot and What’s Not
- Most popular classes (based on attendance): PC basics, e-mail, Word for beginners, Excel, PowerPoint, digital photography, eBay, Internet job searching
- Least popular: library catalog, library databases, homework help
- Topical favorites: travel websites, health, Google, starting your own website, introduction to the Internet
- We’ve also tried (with so-so results): blogging basics, food and cooking, auto repair, investment sources and consumer tips, typing practice, Q&A sessions (PC basics, e-mail)

Future plans: intermediate Excel and PowerPoint, Web design

The Ninety Minute Rule
It’s better to break information into manageable chunks rather than cram too much material into one session. Our PC basics course started as one session and quickly blossomed into a three-part series. People learn by doing. Hands-on practice is critical. Our patrons overwhelmingly prefer “learn a little, do a little.” When a class can’t be accomplished comfortably in ninety minutes it usually indicates the agenda was too ambitious. Scale down or consider part two.

Flexible Scheduling
Seniors require daytime sessions, and working people demand weekends and evenings. Shuffle class days and times each month to maximize attendance. Saturday morning classes (generally a slow time at the library) readily fit into a teacher’s regular weekend rotation. If possible, schedule extra sessions of hugely oversubscribed classes to accommodate the overflow. Call the day before to confirm attendance. Encourage wait-listed people to “fly standby” because the chances of an empty seat are excellent. Don’t be afraid to cancel classes with low registration. Offer to send the packet of materials that were to be distributed in class.

Be Prepared
One day your regularly scheduled teacher will call informing you she can’t teach class that day. A good plan B is worth its weight in gold. Finding a substitute teacher on short notice can be challenging. So far, our teaching staff has risen to the occa-

sion and patrons were delighted. Those of us who have subbed appreciate colleagues who have their handouts ready. It also helps to sit in on other classes from time to time.

Spread the Word!
Satisfied, word-of-mouth patrons are every library’s best advertisements. Library websites, class flyers, library newsletters, events, discussion lists, blogs, and press releases reach wider audiences. In short: Use every tool you have.

Room for Improvement
The best way to determine true program success (in this manager’s opinion) is not standard written class evaluations or examining what cutting-edge libraries are offering next month. It is by observing people as they exit class. Are they glazed over or actively engaged? Do they eagerly grab next month’s class schedule?

Compliment, Don’t Compete
Offer students interested in advanced courses taught by Microsoft-certified personnel a list of local adult education, community college, and organization options. Consider partnering with local organizations by offering custom classes for their members. We are working on offering computer classes in conjunction with our local Literacy Volunteers group in 2008.

Finally, remember that change can be good. Embrace new ideas, whether from staff or patrons. Don’t be afraid to make changes or add new topics to your programming. Your community will thank you for it!
Free2 Marketing Campaign

Bay Area (Calif.) libraries have launched a marketing campaign to reintroduce communities to their local libraries. Taking its cue from “Got Milk?” and similar industry image-raising efforts, the Free2 Campaign is designed to raise awareness of the central role libraries play in people’s lives and how libraries are meeting increased demand for a new host of services.

The Free2 Campaign is an eighteen month effort involving interactive and traditional advertising, sponsored initiatives, special events, and promotional activities at 165 library locations in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties. According to Luis Herrera, city librarian in San Francisco, the campaign will help dispel clichés about libraries while promoting how such vital institutions keep adapting in the digital age.

“Thanks to libraries, we are free to do so much,” he said. “We surf the Web. We compete with friends in video games. We discover new worlds. We laugh and cry our way through good reads. We research new business ideas. We learn English as a second language. We attend lectures. We do yoga. We connect with friends and family. The library is an amazingly empowering place to connect, learn, and play.”

Implicit in the campaign’s core concept, Free2, is a question for library patrons and supporters: What are you free to do—or be—thanks to your local library? A writing contest, launched simultaneously with the Free2 Campaign, invites audiences to describe, in twenty-five words or less, how they are Free2. There will be ten grand prize winners whose responses may be featured in future campaign ads.

For more information, visit www.wearefree2.org.

Talking Book Service Begins Move to Digital Technology

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLSBPH) of the Library of Congress has begun the move to digital audio technology as the backbone of its recorded talking book system.

The domestic spending bill recently signed into law included an increase of $12.5 million each year for six years to be used for the nationwide transition away from audio cassette books and players to digital format.

The digital system will be based on flash memory technology, using flash drives. Advantages include: flash memory provides better audio quality; storage capacity is larger and will require fewer cartridges per book and eliminate the need to turn the cassette over; playback machines will be smaller and lighter; and machines will last longer and be more robust. The move to digital will mean an overall cost savings that will be redirected to other facets of the talking book program.

The program will continue to pro-
vide audio cassette machines to customers during the transition. During FY2008, 12,000 digital players will be produced per month for nationwide distribution.

For more information, visit www.loc.gov/nls.

**Webcams Connect Military Families**

Jennie Taylor and her children haven't touched or played with their husband and father, Utah National Guard Lt. Brent Taylor, in nearly a year. But they have at least seen him. Brent Taylor is stationed in northern Iraq with the National Guard.

Now, the greatest thing to happen to military families, as Taylor calls it, is coming to libraries throughout Utah Valley, specifically for the use of families of deployed soldiers.

Kraig Thorne, district four senior vice commander for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), started a program to deliver webcams to every library in Utah County. Numerous families of deployed soldiers can go to their library and talk and see their deployed family member.

Taylor, who is also the Family Readiness Group Leader for the 116th Convoy Security Company, says she was surprised at the number of families she knew who couldn't talk with their deployed loved ones through a webcam.

Thorne said he stumbled upon the idea for the webcams last year. The VFW was giving out phone cards when the thought occurred to him. “For the cost of two of those cards you can buy a webcam,” he said. He wrote letters to several libraries and asked if they would be willing to accept a webcam and set it up on a computer specifically for military families to use.

So far, the VFW has given the webcams, provided by donated funds from Mountain American Credit Union, to Pleasant Grove, Lehi, and Orem libraries and intends to give one to every library in the county. Kristi Seely, director of the Lehi Library, said the library is excited to help out the troops and their families. “It’s just a great service for those who are serving,” she said.

For more information, e-mail csmith@desnews.com.

**Connect, Click, Listen & Watch**

Prince George's County (Md.) Memorial Library System in Hyattsville is now offering streaming music and video, making it possible for library customers to listen to or watch great music and theatre from home. They can choose from the Smithsonian’s virtual encyclopedia of the world’s musical and aural traditions; African American historical jazz, blues, gospel, and more; classical vocal and choral music, including chamber, orchestral, solo, instrumental, and opera; and 250 landmark performances of the world’s leading plays with acclaimed actors, along with more than one hundred film documentaries, online in streaming video.

You can create a playlist of your favorite titles or explore a musical genre through themed playlists. Search by keyword, artist, genre, instrument, country, label, and more.

Grab your library card and sign in from home today. Visit www.pgcmls.info, click on “E-Center,” then select “Music & Video” from the right menu. For more information, visit the website or call (301) 699-3500.

**Online Education Goes Public at Morris County Library**

Morris County (N.J.) Library (MCL) is offering online educational instruction. The county’s eLearn @ MCL: Online Education Workshop is among the first distance learning programs offered at the public library level. The objective of eLearn @ MCL is to foster an online community where users can explore library resources while studying a variety of subjects.

Content for the eLearn module is presented via a password restricted website. Assignments and discussions are posted to an adjoining forum site which provides a suitable platform for online interaction, questions, and feedback. There is no grading system for the course; eLearn @ MCL is an open and relaxed learning environment, much in the spirit of the public library.

The first eLearn class, “An Introduction to the Music of the Middle Ages,” was presented in March 2008. The two-week session offered short readings and assignments, with an opportunity to sample music, video clips, artwork, and literature. MCL resources and remote databases were highlighted.

For more information about the eLearn @ MCL online workshops, contact Cinthia Levy, music and media librarian, at clevy@co.morris.nj.us, or visit the eLearn website at www.mclibvids.gti.net/eLearn/welcome.html.
There are 9,108 public libraries in the United States, as reported by local libraries to their state agencies and by the states to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Of those, 1,544 are multi-site systems with branches and bookmobiles. The branches account for 7,503 stationary sites.¹

A branch library, for the purposes of the statistical report, “is an auxiliary unit of an administrative entity which as at least all of the following: 1. Separate quarters; 2. An organized collection of library materials; 3. Paid staff; and 4. Regularly scheduled hours for being open to the public.”²

Numbers and definitions don’t begin to describe what’s going on at all of these sites. Library users may rarely venture downtown to the central library. For them the neighborhood branch is their library. They know the staff and the collection. They come to read the newspaper, surf the Web, or take their children to storytime. Administering a multi-site system means adding a layer, or more, of oversight to coordinate activities and to ensure fiscal responsibility. Maintaining “neighborhood” without becoming mired in bureaucracy is a balance that this column’s contributors manage to do well.

A Slice of the Action: Branch Libraries in the OCLS

Anyone who has ever worked in a branch library (or any library, for that matter) knows that planning the workday to go one way and how it actually plays out are two different stories. In the division of branches at the Orange County (Fla.) Library System (OCLS) in Orlando, we are no different. Whether
the children's storyteller is stuck in traffic, the computer tech called in and a full class starts in ten minutes, or the book drop is overflowing, our mission remains the same: to bring “value to the residents . . . through collections, staff, services, and facilities” and to connect “our changing community to the evolving world of ideas, information, and technology.” Some days are more challenging than others, but through it all, our fourteen branches embrace system-wide fundamentals to maintain continuity while being considerate of the uniqueness of our communities.

As a system, there are several processes in place to assure that branches are providing cohesive service to our patrons. Our strategic plan is a collaborative planning process, including all levels of staff throughout the system. Branch goals cascade from the organization’s goals to ensure that we are focusing on what we need to do to be successful as individual branches and still contribute to the system’s overall achievements.

The library’s policies and procedures are uniform. Our rules of conduct set forth our expectations of what is and is not appropriate behavior by patrons as well as the consequences for violating those guidelines. This process enables each of us to walk into any location and be able to protect the rights of library staff and patrons. Both our library card requirements and our fines and fees structure are standardized. While we do not rotate staff, there are times when a location may need additional coverage and we will seek assistance from other branches. The uniformity of our fundamental policies and procedures let staff approach any situation with confidence and the ability to provide seamless customer service. Excellent customer service is a priority at the OCLS, and we use a secret shopper program to assess how we are doing as an organization. All locations are currently shopped quarterly. Points are awarded to individuals and locations, and are redeemable for cash or time off.

The OCLS has a diverse program initiative. Our community relations department provides centralized adult programming at all locations to celebrate events such as National Music Month, Black History Month, and other programs of interest. Our children’s department at the main library coordinates the summer reading program for all locations, and both departments work together to provide infant, toddler, and pre-K storytimes every week. Besides these programming efforts, each branch is responsible for designing programs to suit each location’s demographics.

Throughout the year, the OCLS has other programs and events for our younger patrons. Thanks to a grant awarded by Entertainment Arts (EA), all locations have gaming pods. During the day, children under the age of eighteen can check out tokens and play up to thirty minutes of featured games on Xbox 360. Each month, locations host their own game nights which include Dance, Dance Revolution, Wii game competitions, and other gaming opportunities. Branches may elect to host additional gaming activities, and one of our branches recently hosted a Halo 3 after-hours event for adults and teens with parental consent, partnering with local vendors such as Best Buy, Game Stop, and the Geek Squad.

For teens interested in volunteering, they can apply to be members of our Teen Library Corps. Through this program, teens can help plan programs, assist at events, give suggestions for teen services, meet new people, and earn community service hours for scholarship eligibility. This is especially popular during our summer months.

In addition to the public computers available to our patrons, the OCLS offers many computer classes in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole to assist our users in building their computer skills. Offering cutting-edge classes such as Google SketchUp, Podcasting, iMovie, and GarageBand, our computer class instructors (officially called technology customer support specialists) are on hand to guide users through today’s computer applications. During the summer, we also have computer camp called Camp Savvy for children and teens, offering fun classes such as Color Me Perfect using GIMP and Starring Me: Movie Maker.

Although much of our library operations are consistent system-wide, our branches have very different flavors and personalities. Our locations are predominantly suburban, with a few urban branches. Most of the physical layouts differ from location to location, from shopping centers to freestanding buildings. As a result, our collections and displays are coordinated to fit the layout of each branch.

There are a few technological variations from location to location as well. Eight branches have self checkout stations, using RFID tags for processing and security. Plans to outfit additional locations with this technology will be considered as funding becomes available. Six of our branches have ELLIS labs which are available to our patrons learning English as a Second Language. They are able to learn and practice how to read, write, and speak English at their own
pace. Two branches recently began offering English Chatter, a program that encourages patrons to come by and practice their English speaking skills while enjoying refreshments. Future programs are being developed to include other languages. We are seeking further opportunities through grants and partnerships to increase this resource at other locations. OCLS Interactive Virtual Experience (OLIVE) resides at four locations and allows patrons to speak to one of our call center representatives virtually face to face. If onsite staff is assisting other patrons or a patron prefers to seek assistance independently, OLIVE is available to help locate materials at that location, place a hold, and obtain information regarding their library account and more.

The OCLS is continuously seeking to develop partnerships in the business community. Through awarded grants, we have created Job Start, Job Smart; Grow Your Business Know Your Business; and Smart Investing. These programs and products are hosted at branches throughout the system and on our website.

All branches have goals unique to their location, yet connected to the system's goals. For example, an OCLS goal is to "increase utilization." From this goal, one location created a branch goal to "increase program and class attendance by 10 percent." To support the branch goal, staff goals range from creating a gaming program series to developing a computer class to instruct patrons how to convert their personal photos into coloring sheets for children. Thus, staff has a vested role in the library's overall achievement. Our goals allow us to tap into the creative and original abilities of all staff, inspiring new services, utilizing new technologies, and taking the OCLS to the next level. As reflected in our mission statement, "Through continuous innovation, the Orange County Library System will create a well-informed, well-connected community, making Orange County a great place to live, learn, work, and play."

Through partnerships with residents and local businesses, and outreach to our community groups and schools, the OCLS is weaving itself into the fabric of the community and creating lifelong relationships with its patrons.

Requests, Neighbors, and More at Durham County Library's East Regional Library

Elizabeth Ann Watson, Library Assistant, East Regional Library, Durham County (N.C.) Public Library, elizabeth.ann.watson@gmail.com

I work at the East Regional Library of the Durham County (N.C.) Library (DCL) System. East Regional opened on June 16, 2006. It has 25,000 square feet and a collection of almost 70,000 items. East is six miles from the main library in downtown Durham.

Library users can make requests themselves online using the Horizon Information Portal, or our staff can place the request for them. If neither Main nor East owns a copy of a requested item, it can be requested from one of the other branches or from other library systems through interlibrary loan. The staff at Main pulls the requested items from the shelves, the currier drives items out here to the East Regional Branch, the patron is notified via telephone or e-mail that their requested item has arrived, and the patron comes here to their friendly neighborhood East Regional Library to pick it up. This popular service illustrates the synergy that occurs everyday between the Main Library and the East Regional Library.

"I go to Oak Grove Elementary and I'm in first grade!" several of our young patrons tell us as they get their first library card and check out the Junie B. Jones books. Oak Grove Elementary is about a half-mile walk from the East Regional Library, so our branch location here gives the students of nearby Oak Grove, Neal Middle School, and Southern High School the independence to walk or bike to the library rather than taking a bus or getting a ride downtown to Main. Of course, adults have the same option. It is all about accessibility, convenience, and beating those high gas prices! These neighborhood school children and their families feel a sense of ownership in this branch library that they are unable to feel about Main, which is far away from their homes and schools. It is truly their library, and they claim it. The neighbors here in the eastern part of Durham have their Homeowner's Association meetings here at East, as well as sorority meetings, science summer camp, and more.

The Friends of the DCL have set up a book sale cart at East. Mass market paperbacks are only a dollar, hardbacks are three dollars each, and they've been selling like ice cream cones on a hot day! Every penny from the book sale goes to the Friends of the Library. Funding requests can be submitted in writing to the Friends for systemwide projects and projects at the individual branches. The Friends choose which projects they will fund.

East also offers a variety of programs, including ballroom dancing for adults, Dance, Dance, Revolution for teens, and Wii video gaming for seniors. Some programs such as the summer reading program
(this summer’s theme is “Catch the Reading Bug”) are systemwide. If a particularly good entertainer or speaker is discovered, he or she may be scheduled to appear at several library locations. East offers similar programming to Main, but East offers more programs in proportion to its number of staff members than Main does.

When I think about the relationship between Main and the East, I think about the Main as the hub of the wheel and the East as one of the spokes. Main is the mothership and the East is the landing craft. Main is where much of the paperwork, technical support, and other administrative duties and behind the scenes tasks are handled, which frees us at East to do the day-to-day, frontlines work of the library system. That is not to say that frontlines work does not happen at the Main Library—it certainly does happen everyday. However, it is more efficient and saves a lot of time and redundancy to have certain functions of the library system centralized in one location. East is a partner, an extension, a satellite, an ally, and an arm of Main. As I mentioned before, we share collections and sometimes even staff. East, the other six branches, the bookmobile, and Older Adult & Shut-In Service (OASIS) are symbols that the city of Durham and its library system are growing. I think that synergy is the best word to describe this relationship because together East and Main can do more than either could do alone.

“Do you have any of these books that are on my summer reading list?” I was asked just the other day. I am proud to say that we did have many of the books on the list here at East, and the rest we were able to request from the Main Library and other libraries. Together, Main and all the branches are able to achieve the 4 Cs: collaboration, community, convenience, and contentment.

In the Loop: Communication Means Success

Mimi Morris, Assistant Director for Branch and Extension Services, Dayton (Ohio) Metro Library, mmorris@daytonmetrolibrary.org

Up, down, and sideways—effective internal communication for a branch staff must extend across all levels of the organization. All staff members, from administrators to managers to frontline staff, must share the responsibility for creating and maintaining information pathways. The branch manager is the key to putting it all together, in the sometimes difficult position of making sure the right information flows smoothly to administration, staff, and peers. At the Dayton Metro Library (DML), we try to provide all the necessary tools, but we rely on each manager to use them.

Planning for communication success at our twenty-one branches begins even before a new branch manager’s first day on the job. I always interview with another manager from a neighboring or demographically similar branch. That manager becomes the mentor for the new hire who can answer questions and be a sounding board for ideas. During the new manager’s first two weeks, he will have one-on-one time with every administrator, starting with the executive director. He will also meet with each main library department manager. I don’t expect the new manager to come away with an in-depth knowledge of each department, but a basic understanding of how administration and main library departments can support branch initiatives and goals. The role of a branch manager can be isolating. To counter that, I meet with all branch managers quarterly.

Last October, I observed that everyone seemed a little overwhelmed after a summer of big changes and a new strategic planning cycle, so we had an “un-meeting.” The “un-agenda” clearly stated that there would be no discussion of strategic planning, circulation issues, or spine labels. I divided them into small groups and asked them to share ways to de-stress and tell stories about why they became librarians.

It is important to note that good communication is not just a managerial accomplishment. Much of DML’s project management success is a testament to cross-functional teams. Implementation of our self-checkout process (called “Easy Checkout”) is a good example. Initial team members for the Phase One branches included frontline circulation people, branch managers, IT department, training, and community relations staff. We talked over every facet of the project, with special focus on ensuring that our branch staff members were comfortable with the process. As ambassadors for Easy Checkout, this group would be responsible for selling this new service to the public. As a team, we took field trips to other libraries to observe their setup and workflow. As the project proceeded, all branch staff members had input into the placement and planning. Our facilities manager acted as a consultant to manage furniture replacement and relocation. It worked! Now in Phase Two, the branch managers for these branches are arranging staff field trips to our own branches, and consulting with their own peers for best practices. As one branch manager said: “The Easy Checkout system
definitely has shown the way we work together!”

As important as it is for staff to communicate within a branch, it is also vital that we talk to one another across the branches. Each branch is unique and takes pride in its own constituency, but as a system we need to be consistent in our procedures so that all of our patrons receive equitable service. DML accomplishes this through group meetings that give staff with similar responsibilities the chance to share experiences and ideas, and develop group responses to challenges. Managers, children’s and teen staff meet regularly, as in most other library systems. In Dayton, we have added branch circulation and IT groups to our meeting schedules.

The circulation round table gives our frontline people the opportunity for real problem solving. What is the best way to communicate the status of damaged items in a community where patrons routinely use multiple branches? How should we respond consistently to patrons with extenuating life circumstances to be fair to them and to other patrons who may not contest a fine or other charge? Sometimes, the meetings are a chance for a little healthy venting. It’s also a way for staff with the same responsibilities across the system to get to know one another personally. That makes it much easier to pick up the phone and call when there is a question or problem. Finally, the round table builds leadership. The members take turns hosting, facilitating, and disseminating the minutes from each meeting, which builds confidence and communication skills that benefit both staff and patron relationships.

Each of our branches has someone in the position of technical reference assistant. The “tech refs” are the branch liaisons to the IT services department and the lead trainers for staff and public. Tech ref meetings provide opportunities for IT services to train branch staff in new equipment and procedures, and get feedback on current conditions. It’s also a time for the reference assistants to work with our training specialist to develop public training materials. Like the circulation round table, the tech ref meetings provide opportunities to build cross-system relationships and individual leadership skills.

It takes a lot of talking, writing, and getting together to keep a group of branch library staff members both informed and empowered to participate in the decisions of the organizations. It takes the same efforts to link multiple branches across a library system. It is only through these efforts that we can create and nurture the channels that let information flow from frontline staff to administration, from the executive director to the managers, and from branch to branch. Up, down, and sideways: Dayton’s path to communication success!

**Doing What We Do Best!**

JEAN HATFIELD, MANAGER, LIONEL ALFORD REGIONAL BRANCH, WICHITA (KANS.) PUBLIC LIBRARY, JHATFIELD@WICHITA.GOV

“Wow, what a wonderful library!” When patrons enter the Lionel Alford Regional Branch Library in Wichita, Kansas, this is what staff frequently hear. Even though the branch is now five years old, new patrons come in each day to discover the treat that awaits them inside.

A great deal of attention has been paid to the new libraries being built as destinations or who have award-winning architecture, expensive furnishings, or carefully designed “fun” features. The Alford Branch was not designed with any of these in mind: It was designed to be functional but attractive. The collections stacks are arranged in a semicircle, affording easy sight lines from the desk. The public service desk is designed so that three or four staff members can easily move around the space in order to provide service at one of four work stations. They have room to maneuver carts behind the desk and to sort materials or work on projects while staffing the desk. This enables the staff to utilize their time in an efficient manner. There are currently five full-time and five part-time staff members and a branch manager for a building that is approximately 18,000 square feet. Everyone helps circulate materials, including the branch manager and the professional-level youth services librarian, allowing everyone to make connections with patrons and understand their needs.

The building was designed with the feel of the open spaces of the prairie and to reflect the area’s aircraft industry. There are large windows which allow for natural light and an entryway with a high ceiling. The shelving is no more than sixty inches high except for the shelves on the perimeter of the building. This creates the feeling of spaciousness, and gives a line of sight down each aisle. The walls are unadorned with the exception of a long bulletin board in the children’s area. The absence of colorful posters, signs, or artwork helps quiet the mind and lets patrons focus on the materials in the collection.

The Wichita Public Library has nine library locations. It serves a city of more than 300,000 people through a very busy central library, four large regional branches, and four commu-
nity libraries. The community libraries provide popular materials and public computers, but have limited reference collections and limited programming because of lower staffing levels and space constraints.

Alford Branch serves as a regional library in the southwest part of the city. It is located near the Interstate highway loop on the west side of the city providing easy access for patrons coming from the north and the west. Since it is near the city limits, it attracts patrons from nearby suburbs and rural areas. The clientele are generally blue-collar, low- and middle-income families. The demographic is changing slightly with a slow influx of Latino and Asian families and an aging population who have lived in the area for many years.

As the newest library in the city, the Alford Branch was designed with a few up-to-date features such as two study rooms, a drive-up window, a self-check machine, and more public use computers than the other regional libraries. The branch also has a lounge area by the windows with comfortable seating and access to two vending machines and food and drink are allowed in this area. The lounge area and study rooms provide space for quiet reading and small group conversation. There are other comfortable chairs throughout the building as well as tables and chairs for group work in the teen area.

The meeting room can accommodate more than one hundred people. It has a small elevated stage area and a sink for making refreshments or cleaning up after craft programs. The Wichita Public Library rents meeting rooms for a modest fee, so the room is used for family events such as showers and anniversary receptions as well as community groups such as the local Harley Davidson Club.

Materials are selected centrally by experienced selectors who have a good understanding of what patrons in each branch will appreciate. The Alford Branch has a large circulation of genre fiction, particularly romance and westerns. Fantasy appeals to all ages as does Christian fiction. Best-selling authors and adventure stories are also well-liked. The nonfiction areas that circulate heavily are in the areas of health, domestic arts, true crime, self help, and religion. Circulation statistics indicates that Alford’s patrons are less interested in scholarly pursuits and more interested in information that makes their day-to-day living easier and more meaningful.

The Alford Branch prides itself on doing the things that a branch library can do well: provide a clean, comfortable environment with friendly staff and easily accessible materials. We have convenient, free parking and space for meeting with others or enjoying a good book in solitude. We accommodate everyone from the excited toddler to the senior citizen in a wheelchair. We welcome factory workers who stop on their way home for a video or audiobook and teens who have found our graphic novels and compact disc collection. We may not have everything a patron is looking for, but we help them locate it elsewhere and offer to have it delivered to the branch for pick up.

As a city department, the Wichita Public Library is chronically underfunded. The Wichita Public Library Foundation and the Friends of the Library provide additional funds for collections and programming. The library administration has made strides in improving collections and facilities and remains focused on identifying low-cost improvements. However, the budgetary limitations force the library staff to sharpen their focus on what they are able to do and to concentrate on providing the best service they can within these limitations.

A branch library serves the community by providing a convenient location and access to materials and information. It can’t be all things to all people, but it can provide a link to the wider world of what libraries have to offer.

**Conclusion**

Branch libraries come in as many shapes and sizes as their independent cousins do. Some have considerable latitude in collection management and programming. Others have prescribed guidelines, schedules, and procedures. Branches may be specialized, offering only local history or genealogy. Branches may be threatened as expenses outpace income, forcing directors and trustees to make tough decisions about hours, staffing, and capital improvements. The neighborhood library is where senior citizens come to read the morning paper, preschoolers come to enjoy storytime, and students come to do homework. There is life in the branches!

**References**

2. Ibid., B-11.
“Book Talk” provides authors’ perspectives on libraries, books, technology, and information. If you have any suggestions of authors you would like to see featured in Book Talk, or if you are interested in volunteering to be an author-interviewer, contact Kathleen Hughes, Editor of Public Libraries, at the Public Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; khughes@ala.org.

From the Suburbs to the Congo
An Interview with Dave Donelson

After many years as a successful consultant and entrepreneur in the broadcasting industry, Dave Donelson fashioned a second career as a writer. His most recent book is Heart of Diamonds, a romantic thriller about diamond smuggling in the Congo, to be published by Kunati Books in September 2008. In addition to this fast-paced commercial thriller, his diverse portfolio includes everything from a humorous novel to issue-oriented journalism. His first book, Creative Selling: Boost Your B2B Sales, is a non-fiction prescriptive. His second, Hunting Elf, which began as an online audio podcast novel, is a comedic adventure about a dog with a taste for freedom and a home with a hapless couple in the suburbs. Dave also writes for some thirty-five national and regional publications ranging from the Christian Science Monitor to Westchester Magazine. His website, www.davedonelson.com, has more details about his life and work. He’s also a trustee and past president of the board of the Westchester Library System (WLS), a cooperative with thirty-eight member libraries serving Westchester County, New York.

Public Libraries: You had a long career in business before you became a writer. What brought you to writing?

Dave Donelson: Considering my age when I started writing professionally, there are those who might say it was some sort of strange midlife crisis, but that’s not true. Writing has been my lifelong dream, even though I enjoyed the various other things I did along the way. I was in the television business for a long time. I sold advertising, founded several related businesses, even
owned part of a couple of really small TV stations. But my true life’s ambition has always been to leave something behind, to communicate with future generations as well as my contemporaries. I get immense pleasure thinking of someone one hundred years from now pulling one of my books off the shelf in a library somewhere, blowing off the dust, and seeing what I had to say.

PL: In the interest of full disclosure, you are a trustee for the WLS, where I am executive director. How did you get involved and what’s serving on the board about?

DD: It’s a lot of very rewarding work! A few years ago, not long after I began writing full time, I felt the need to give something back to my community. I also had a skill set from my years in business that I felt might be useful to some worthwhile organization. Since I’ve always been a big library patron, volunteering to help out was a natural. Coincidentally, my library’s seat on the WLS board was coming open, so they asked me to step in. It’s been a lot of fun. It’s also been a heck of a learning experience. I’ve been privileged to see how WLS and our member libraries—and other libraries around the country—serve their communities, often in ways the public at large doesn’t realize. Then there’s the whole advocacy side of things. As an old salesman, I love visiting legislators and other public officials as well as potential donors, and telling them about the great things we accomplish in library land. Besides, I’ve made a whole new set of friends who love books! By the way, one of the acknowledgments I make in Heart of Diamonds is a “thank you” to the Westchester Library System and our member libraries. That wasn’t just being nice, either; I pored through our collections for a year as I was researching the book.

PL: Before we get to Heart of Diamonds, let me ask you about your writing career. Your first two books, Creative Selling and Hunting Elf, were completely different from Heart of Diamonds. Your magazine articles and blogs seem to cover everything under the sun, too. Why such diverse subjects?

DD: Sometimes I think it’s because I’m easily bored, but that’s only partly true. It’s mainly because I’m darned curious. I absolutely love the research phase of writing, digging into records, interviewing experts, talking to the man on the street, just learning something I didn’t know before. I really enjoy just diving into a subject and seeing where it takes me, whether it be for a serious magazine article, like the one I wrote about the battle between environmentalists and developers over land use along the Hudson River, or for a comedic novel like Hunting Elf, which is about the goofy things that go on in the world of dog shows. I write about golf, small and large businesses, public affairs, home building, travel. It could also be, of course, that I’m easily distracted.

PL: So what prompted you to write a book about the Congo?

DD: That started with a series of articles David Fay wrote for National Geographic where he trekked on foot across two thousand kilometers of the Congo River Basin. It caught my imagination and I started reading about the region and got caught up in it—the history, the violence, the drama, the beauty. The more I read, the more I fell in love with Africa. And then, when my wife and I visited the first time, I was really hooked.

PL: Does your new book fit neatly into a genre?

DD: I don’t know how neatly it fits, but Heart of Diamonds is a high-concept thriller. There is intrigue at the highest levels of government, criminal masterminds, a crusading journalist, and an altruistic doctor. There is also a very strong love triangle, so perhaps it fits into the romance category, too. Let’s call it a romantic thriller.

PL: It’s a commercial work, yet it touches on many social and political issues. Was that intentional?

DD: Not really, but I couldn’t avoid it. The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC] face so many human challenges that they just had to have a big place in the book. I’ve also been very moved by the stories I’ve read, the people I’ve talked to. From the time of King Leopold to the present day—that’s well over a hundred years—that nation has either been at war or subject to stifling oppression. More than five million people have died there since 1998—making what’s known as the Second Congo War the deadliest conflict since World War II. And it’s still going on! Child soldiers, institutionalized rape, famine, wave after wave of disease. They don’t make headlines on U.S. TV, but I can’t ignore them.

PL: Heart of Diamonds has a strong sense of “place.” The settings seem very real. How did you achieve that?

DD: That’s one of the things I got from visiting Africa. My wife, Nora,
and I went to Zambia and Uganda as tourists—the DRC wasn’t exactly a vacation destination at the time—and I took thousands of pictures, hundreds of pages of notes, even hours of audio recordings. I also watched every VHS tape and DVD I could find in our libraries’ collections that were shot on location. I looked for details that would make the scenes come alive. Things like what a Hamerkop’s nest looks like or how a fisherman paddles a makoro (a dugout canoe) while standing in the back. Nora and I spent a lot of time walking through the bush, but also in the markets and villages. One of the friends we made in Zambia took us into his home, which was a mud hut with a thatched roof, fed us some nsima (a thick porridge made with cornmeal), and introduced us to the headman of the village. All those things made it into the book.

PL: How long did it take you to write this book?

DD: From concept to completion was a five-year process, although certainly not nonstop. Heart of Diamonds went through five complete drafts, including two major revisions.

PL: Tell us about your writing process and habits. How do you work?

DD: In general, I research before I write. I compile boxes of notes in longhand, long lists of bookmarked webpages, and kind of let everything wash over me for awhile. Then I work up several plot outlines to see if I can find one that moves at a good pace and makes sense.

PL: How much time do you spend promoting your book? Does that take away time from your writing?

DD: Promotion, I’m sorry to say, takes up a huge amount of time. Don’t get me wrong; my publisher is great. They’re aces with national publicity, distribution, and marketing, not to mention having a great editorial and design team. But it’s still up to me to arrange readings, book signings, and other local events. I also spend at least two hours a day building an online presence. I have over a dozen blogs—not just one. I’m active on Facebook, MySpace, LibraryThing—everywhere I can paste my name. It takes a lot of time.

PL: Let’s learn a little about you as a person. Who is your favorite author?

DD: That’s an extremely difficult question. I like different authors for different reasons. Ernest Hemingway was undoubtedly my first inspiration and For Whom the Bell Tolls is probably my all-time favorite novel. When I visited his home in Key West a few years ago, I actually got quite misty-eyed peering into the loft where he worked. I’m also a big fan of John Steinbeck’s. I admire the many different kinds of books he wrote. But then there are Margaret Atwood, Jane Smiley, Cormac McCarthy, Peter Matthiessen, Wallace Stegner, Lee Smith . . . the list is truly endless.

PL: What is your next project?

DD: There is a sequel to Heart of Diamonds in the works. Valerie Grey is the perfect character to take anywhere in the world to find new adventures. I’m also working on a multi-voiced novel that takes place during the Great Depression. It’s based on some of my family’s history in the days of live radio in the Midwest. Then there’s the next episode in the adventures of Elf, my little dog friend. My plate is very full but I’m having a blast.

Dave Donelson

While I’m doing that, I create the characters, write bios for them, try to give them individual tics and habits, speech patterns—sort of get to know them. Many times, I’ll find that a given character dictates a plot change. Maybe in my imagination they wouldn’t do something I wanted them to do in the plot. The character almost always wins those battles. Once the story and its characters exist, I start putting words on paper. Then it really gets interesting because the story never goes where I thought it would at first.

PL: What is your next project?
“Internet Spotlight” explores Internet and Web topics relevant to librarians in the public library sector. Your input is welcome.

Ten Things We Learned While Building New Websites

Michael and I have been hard at work for the last year or so, planning new websites for our respective organizations. And friends, let us both tell you up front—this is hard work! So as Michael and I sat sipping lowfat soy lattes, we started chatting . . . wait a second. Actually, we started brainstorming at breakneck speed. We've been so busy working on our sites—we missed our article deadline! Yikes—let's get crackin'!

Michael: <chugging latte> <ahem> Yes, so, we've been planning and building our respective websites. Well, technically David and I both worked on small teams that planned and developed their respective sites together. Mine is www.webjunction.org and David's is www.tscpl.org. Once again, this is no easy task. If you are embarking on a similar journey, or work with folks doing this, please take a few minutes to read our “Ten Things We Learned While Building New Websites” lists.

David's Top Ten

1. Administration’s approval is key.
This point is one of the most important. If your organization's administrators don't understand the project, what the goals are, or why, then you're sunk. Without administration's support, you cannot succeed in fully realizing the website redesign living in your head.

Here's what I mean. My administration has been great. They actually thought up the idea of turning our website into a “digital branch.” I was hired to help flesh the idea out. They had already discussed the digital branch in these terms: If we were opening a branch library tomorrow, we'd need to
have some things in place, like the opening day collection, who's staffing the branch, and who's cleaning the toilets, for starters. How do each of those concepts apply in a digital setting? (And is there really such a thing as a digital toilet?).

So I was lucky to have a library and an administration already focused on building websites. But that doesn't mean I can rest on my digital laurels! I frequently hold manager training sessions during our weekly management meetings, introducing our managers to new things (for example, I’m teaching them Twitter tomorrow). If we don't grow, we get stale.

2. Explain. Lots.
I have had to do MUCH explaining. Sometimes, more than is necessary. Sometimes, I have to re-explain something. Maybe more than once. And that's ok. The goal with explanations is familiarity with new concepts, and the site redesign, so that on “opening day,” your staff members understand their roles.

When possible, give concrete examples. Our new site is blog-based. I was able to point to similar sites, like Ann Arbor (Mich.) District Library’s website, as an already successful example.

3. Communication is really key.
During your migration from the old site to the new, you will need to communicate to staff in a variety of ways. The best way is person-to-person communication. This provides a great opportunity for staff to ask questions, share concerns, and so on. Person-to-person can take many forms, including:

- One-on-one
- Departmental meetings
- Larger library meetings
- E-mail—for communicating changes, procedures, and asking questions.
- 2.0 tools like wikis and blogs—We shared meeting minutes, updates, and mock-ups using these tools.

4. Don't focus on specifics.
When you ask for staff opinions, don't spend lots of time on specifics. Another way to say that is “don't squabble over the carpet color.” When asking for opinions in meetings, directly state what you want: instead of design help, you are looking for overall reactions to ideas and mock-ups.

You will still get specifics. Here's what you do with them: thank the person for those thoughts, and then tuck it away. One person's opinion is just that—an opinion. But if twenty people tell you the same thing, that's more than an opinion—it's something you should strongly consider.

5. Choose the right materials up front.
When building a new house, your builder (hopefully) makes sure to use the right materials for the job—even the right types of wood. Otherwise, if he reaches the final stages and then realizes the wrong type of wood was used, he has to start all over again... costing time and money for both the builder and the (now highly irritated) homeowner-to-be.

Websites are the same way. You'll want to give some serious, heavy-duty thought to a few things up front, including:

- CMS—What type of CMS (content management system) are you going to use for the site? This decision affects all other decisions.
- Navigation—Are you going to use horizontal menus, tabs, or vertical menus? What will those menus represent? How will they stand out?
- Naming schemes—Are you going to call it “interlibrary loan” or “stuff I can get for free from somewhere else?” Naming and labeling need to be consistent and make sense to your customers.

6. If you goof, you can start over.
Even the best-laid plans can end up being poor ones down the road—it might just be a change in technology.

No one has cornered the market on building websites yet! If you build something that ends up not meeting your needs, that's ok. You learned something, first and foremost, and you can simply scrap that idea and start over. In fact, many websites regularly do this—they update constantly, to remove things that didn't work, and to try out new ideas (hence the “always beta” moniker found around the Web).

7. Customers rule.
When building a new website, you need feedback from your customers! How do you get this? There are quite a few ways. Here are some ideas:

- Focus groups: I held five customer focus groups, and introduced the redesigned website to real patrons (and fed them cookies). You know what? People came, and they had some great opinions.
- Web surveys: We created a Web-based survey asking about website needs and wants.
- Useability testing: Want to find out how customers use your site? Watch them do it.
- Watch customers work: Yes, it sounds slightly evil. But glance at those public computers as you walk through the reference room.
and see what your customers are doing. Then keep those observations in mind during the redesign.

8. You’ll be surprised.
No matter how hard and detailed you plan out your site, timeline, and goals, something unplanned will happen. Things take longer than planned (or, I’m just an optimist). At my library, we had great plans—but getting people together in a meeting to decide on those plans took much longer than I had anticipated!

Sometimes, great ideas on paper don’t work out in reality, or they only work for a while. Our Meebo IM widget, for example, started out great. But now, we’re looking into more customizable IM tools.

9. It’s the people.
Everyone needs to realize this: Website visitors aren’t satisfied surfing the “Information Superhighway” anymore to find information. Instead, they want to interact—with the author and with other readers. Your job isn’t just to supply a clear pointer to your online library catalog. Your job now is to enhance that catalog with ways to connect patrons to the content, to you as the librarian, and to each other.

David: OK, that was just nine things. I’m saving my tenth one for the end of the article. Michael, what have you got for us?

Michael’s Top Ten

1. You can’t do it on your own.
Coworkers, testers, coders, historical users, desired users, consultants, supportive administration, and management: In one way or another we are all working on the new site.

2. Launch is a step in the journey, not the destination.
Remembering this will make number three easier on your mind.

3. You can’t do everything exactly the way you wanted to.
But you’ll have time to build a foundation and a platform later to improve.

4. Just because you like or don’t like something doesn’t mean you should or shouldn’t do that with your site.
You are working on the site because you have valuable things to contribute, but some are simply opinions. Separate those from number five.

5. When you are sure something needs to happen on your site, make it happen.
This might mean extra research, preparing documents to explain your point of view, or even taking somebody out to lunch. If that doesn’t work though, and you know it is truly that important, push, push, push. But remember—don’t push too often! If you are sure something you want isn’t going to happen or can’t be made to work (yet, see number two), stop pushing.

6. Don’t push yourself or your staff too hard.
Don’t get me wrong, there are going to be some loooong days, weeks, and even months. But take some days off. And make sure the people that love you feel appreciated. This also means you have to eat your meals and try to get enough sleep.

7. Pick the right tools and technology for your site!
Oh, crap! This didn’t come up until number seven! This has to be number one. It’s funny to see it as num-

ber seven here, but in real life your foot will have been shot and precious resources (both yours and your community’s) squandered.

8. Seek out friends and confidants to talk things over with.
Pick these people carefully and make it a give-and-take relationship as best you can, but man, this is gonna be hard and you are going to need a hearing ear and an understanding friend on occasion. Not everybody is going to speak the “I’m building a new site” language or find it interesting, so put some time into setting up this little support network before you start. I’m willing to be leaned on a bit to a few of you out there in Libraryland, btw.

9. It’s just a website.
Yes, libraries are one of the most positive and beneficial, yet cash-strapped, resources the world has to offer. And you are correct in thinking that the consequences of mediocrity will be felt throughout the community. So now that we all agree this is a rare and honorable responsibility, try to remember: It’s just a website. Plan, take care, budget time, work hard, love, let yourself be loved and supported, but don’t forget—at the end of the day, it’s just a website.

<drumroll please . . . >

10. What’s your tenth thing?
We like this column to be as interactive as a print column can be—so the tenth thing involves YOU! Let us know: What’s your tenth thing? When building a website, what do you find important that we left out? Let us know about it. We’ll either write about it, or maybe mail you a Pez dispenser.
“Bringing in the Money” presents fund-raising strategies for public libraries. Many librarians are turning to alternative funding sources to supplement shrinking budgets. Fund-raising efforts not only boost finances, but also leverage community support and build collaborative strategies.

Letter to a Newly Appointed Library Trustee

Dear friend,

Congratulations on your new appointment as a trustee at our old hometown library! When I recall the various institutions of our town, there are none that I remember as fondly as the library. The school—in retrospect at least—was pretty good. The churches seemed to be doing their jobs. There were parks, Little Leagues, and Boy and Girl Scouts. There was just about everything you could want in a small town. But, for me at least, the library was most special of all. In my mind, you couldn't have a more important and exciting position than the one you have now accepted.

You asked me if I had any advice, probably because you’ve heard that I’ve worked with several libraries in a fund-raising capacity. And I do have a little advice, although it’s of the most gentle kind.

But before I begin, please realize that you have nothing to worry about. If you are a good human being, you will be a good trustee. And since I already know that you are a good person, I have no doubt that the library is in the best of hands. This probably makes all the following advice superfluous, but I’ll go ahead with it anyway.

The Basics

There will be meetings on inconvenient days and at times when you just don’t feel like going. If humanly possible, you should attend anyway. The first rule is: Show up! Is there anything more basic than this? I don’t even want to mention the number of board meetings that I’ve attended where the first discussion is whether there is a quorum present or not? Sorry, but the position
of trustee is not simply something to put on your résumé or brag about to friends. It is a public trust that you’ve accepted. And that means it is your responsibility to participate in the meetings.

Post the library’s calendar of events—including any upcoming Friends events—in a prominent place in your house. Choose the ones that you would like to attend. You don’t have to go to everything, but you should certainly attend some.

Visit the library. You mentioned in your note that you wanted your library to become a “center of community,” and that is exactly the right attitude. But never forget that you are a part of this community, too. A flourishing library is a library filled with people. One of them should be you.

While you are visiting the library, you will see staff and volunteers striving to give a uniform level of top-notch service to every patron. There is no hierarchy in patron service. Grade school students, waitresses, prosperous businessmen, celebrities, and trustees are all equal in the eyes of a good library staff member. You should never demand, or expect, special treatment.

The trustees hire the library director, and the director hires and manages the staff. All supervisors deal with personnel and management problems as a ongoing part of their jobs. Within the library, these problems are the responsibility of the library director. If you think there may be serious issues that are not being adequately addressed, bring them up behind the closed doors of a board meeting. The only direct contact you should ever make in the work life of the staff or library volunteers is to give support and encouragement.

Bringing in the Money
From time to time, any healthy library will attempt to raise money from individuals for supplemental projects. These fund-raising efforts may take the form of annual campaigns, special events, or capital campaigns. As a trustee, it is your responsibility to contribute.

Give what you can. Giving is part of the leadership role embodied in the position of trustee. Your contributions should be large enough to be felt in your family budgeting. You should not be giving more to public television stations or museums or United Way organizations where you are not a board member than to the local institution where you serve as a trustee. When you accept a position as a library trustee, you should immediately reexamine your family’s charitable giving priorities and make sure that the library is appropriately—and proportionately—represented.

At some time in your tenure as trustee, it is highly likely that the library will lead a capital or endowment campaign where major gifts will need to be solicited. As a trustee, you will be expected to contribute and to be ready to ask others to give generously. Not only is it ethically responsible for the trustees to contribute first in these campaigns, but it makes the task of asking others for major gifts much easier. You must be ready to say to your friend or neighbor, “My family is supporting this worthy cause. Won’t you join us?” Whether you knew it or not, you joined the fund-raising community when you accepted this trustee position. You’re a fund-raiser now.

In many cases, trustees are recruited from families that have been in the area for generations. Since the trustees all know each other, the assumption sometimes arises that they know everyone else in the community. And they may even assume that they know all about the financial condition of all the potential contributors in the community. In other words, they think they know where the money is. This can be a very questionable assumption in today’s rapidly changing world. Contrary to expectations, the “old money” families may have no ready cash on hand, and recent arrivals may have unsuspected sources of wealth and may even be eager to support initiatives in their newly adopted hometown. To be effective fund-raisers, the trustees must be sensitive, alert, and eager to bring new people into the fold.

There is a myth in fund-raising circles that all people can become effective fund-raisers. In reality, fund-raising skills are not evenly distributed and some very good trustees will never be effective fund-raisers. Value and encourage the other ways that these trustees contribute to the library. But never get discouraged by the simple reality that a small group of trustees may have to shoulder the majority of the fund-raising responsibilities. As in many sports competitions, the entire team celebrates the win, even when the star players score the most points. Don’t be overly proud of being a star player and don’t be frustrated that everyone isn’t performing at your level. When you score the winning goal, it’s the team’s win, not yours.

If there is a Friends group, you should join at the highest possible level. When the Friends hold a special event or raise money in other ways, you should financially support their efforts. But you should be aware that, in most cases, Friends and trustees have distinct legal identities and responsibilities. You are a
trustee first, and your position as a dues-paying member of the Friends is necessarily secondary.

The Infrastructure for Fund-raising
Encourage your fellow trustees to embrace planning. Some boards become discouraged about the seemingly endless process of planning. They shouldn't. Planning is essential, and the trustees are responsible for seeing that good plans are developed and implemented.

But before planning begins, the trustees should find consensus on a vision for the library and then be willing to invest in research. The vision may be a broad optimistic picture of the library in ten years or it may simply be a conviction that a new program should be developed to meet an emerging community need. The important thing is that the planning should proceed from a shared vision that is fully accepted by both the trustees and the library director.

The task of research often falls to the library director and the staff. Larger libraries and library systems may invest in a consultant to facilitate the process of research and gathering information. Strategic planning initiatives may begin with user surveys, interviews with key stakeholders, and focus groups.

Planning for the development of programs may involve research into the successful work of other libraries. As a trustee, you should encourage this process of gathering information. It is invaluable.

The five-year strategic plan should be designed to move your library toward the trustees’ vision of the future. It establishes a series of goals and objectives. Each year, the library director should work with the trustees to create a one-year implementation plan based on the strategic plan. Any fund-raising goals should emerge from this process. For example, the strategic plan may have a goal of improving the appearance of the children's section, the implementation plan will identify a one-year goal to purchase new furniture, and fund-raising initiatives will be developed to buy new chairs and tables. The fund-raising tasks may be led by the Friends or the library staff with the entire process directed toward bringing the library closer to the vision of the trustees.

Along the way, celebrate the small successes. Not every fund-raising success deserves a ribbon-cutting ceremony, but there are smaller ways to let the staff know that you appreciate their efforts. Something as simple as a box of donuts, a vase of flowers for the front desk, or a simple e-mail of heartfelt congratulations can mean a lot.

The Big Picture
Do you remember when we read Thornton Wilder in high school English class? I still recall how in the play Our Town, he described a letter that was addressed:

“Jane Crofut
The Crofut Farm
Grover’s Corners
Sutton County, NH
United States of America
Continent of North America
Western Hemisphere
The Earth
The Solar System
The Universe
The Mind of God”

Do you remember that? Well, that’s where your library is located, too.

Sometimes it may seem like a too-small building, seemingly insignificant, in one of the tens of thousands of towns scattered across our country. But never forget that it’s not insignificant in the solar system, the universe, or the mind of God. In fact, it's right at the center of the things that are most important.

Best wishes with your exciting and awesome new responsibilities! I know you’ll do a great job.

Your friend,
Lee
“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.

Wiki-What?

I like to call them conversational grenades. Topics that, when introduced in an otherwise friendly chat will cause those involved to dive for opposite ends of the room. Abortion is one that never fails to polarize, while the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did so earlier on, perhaps before the mission was “accomplished.”

Among information scientists there’s one topic that never fails to elicit strong opinions, arguments bordering on the brusque, and general tension. I speak of course, of Wikipedia.

I saw that eye roll, ma’am. And sir, I don’t think the fine editors at Public Libraries would appreciate that kind of language. Decorum, please have some decorum.

Let’s start with a (hopefully) unnecessary introduction. Wikipedia is the brainchild of Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger. It is a free, open, Web-based encyclopedia in which users are allowed to create and edit content. It is, in essence, a collective encyclopedia. Articles cover topics from the mundane (biographies of Elizabeth I) to the more esoteric (spelling words on calculators and discredited Lost theories) and everything in between. There are dedicated editors to articles who monitor changes and adjust for errors and vandalism. Registered users get more privileges, but IP information tagged to any edits allows for the logging of any changes to articles.

This excites the techies among us to no end. Growing up hearing the refrain of “Information wants to be free!” and then finding that the information is not only free to access but also to share is a dream come true. The more, shall we say, conservative among us dismiss Wikipedia as noise. They point out the errors, glaring and minor, and that a great deal of the information listed isn’t knowledge so much as it is trivia.

The same debate rages within Wikipedia itself actually. The logs for articles and discussion forums are rife with intellectual combat that’s as contentious and erudite as anything you’d hear in a print publication office.

Speaking for myself, no citation needed, I fall into a middle ground on the debate. I know, you cannot be neutral on a moving train and I generally find more good about the ideas and principles of Wikipedia, and in attendant concept of wikis as a knowledge tool, but I’m stodgy as well.

Let’s start with the good. As a ready reference tool, a quick glance reference, Wikipedia is relatively solid. If I’m trying to get a rough estimate
of when the Carolingian dynasty reigned (seventh century) or the Latin name for a Bur Oak (Quercus macrocarpa) it’s a fine tool. The editing logs give provenance to any questionable data and solidly written articles are often well-sourced with external links for further reading.

The bad is pretty much what you’d expect. Vandalism isn’t an issue as much as you might think (usually it’s something silly like claiming some celebrity is dead when they are very much alive or someone typing “RYAN SEACREST SUX”) but it happens. External links and sources are sometimes vague or simply inaccurate. There are cases where I’ve seen historical works cited that have long since passed out of use by scholars or are, to put it mildly, offensively biased.

Then there’s the ephemera issue. While it’s all well and good that there are detailed (and I mean detailed) synopses of every Star Trek episode ever (and I mean ever), there’s a sense of slanting scale towards trivia.

As an example, the article on Richard III, King of England and figure in Shakespeare’s historical play, is about 1,400 words long. The article concerning the fictional character of “The Doctor” from Doctor Who is just a bit over 14,000 words.

Of course one can argue, “Well, what more can be said about Richard? He’s dead and Doctor Who is still on the air!” Which is valid and terrifying all at the same time.

Where I made peace with Wikipedia as a reference tool to service teens was in remembering my eighth-grade English teacher, Mrs. Daley’s, sage-like advice: “Encyclopedias are very nice to start with, but don’t stop there.”

For all its success and positives, Wikipedia is not able to provide the depth of a monograph or add to knowledge with new research. It’s a good first step, a way to perhaps settle on an idea or sharpen up an amorphous one, but it’s not the be-all end-all.

Young adults are often dismissed as looking for easy answers, for short cuts and cheats. This is nonsense that comes from a broken era of librarianship. I remember having a librarian drop a huge pile of books on my study carrel in high school and saying “have at it.” I felt adrift and frustrated.

It may not be a rousing crowd-pleaser of a topic but what about good old-fashioned bibliographic instruction? Understanding how references can provide clues for further study, or how indexes and bibliographies can tell you more about a book than the back cover ever will, are just a couple of hints. Providing a shelf of ready reference books is grand, but putting them by the Web terminals is even more helpful.

Teens often face an escalating demand in their schoolwork for more and better sources. Offering programming devoted to becoming a first-class researcher, perhaps in conjunction with local schools, could prove very popular. Talk about the sheer volume of materials available through the library, and how those materials can improve the quality of their assignments. Learning to reach beyond a Google search or a Wikipedia entry into subscription databases can never come too early for curious young adults.

The eye-rolling about Wikipedia will continue, on both sides of the issue, I’m sadly sure. But again, let the simple advice of Mrs. Daley guide you: “Don’t stop there.”

And yes, Ryan Seacrest sux. (Citation Needed)
Public libraries across the United States are implementing strategies to serve immigrant patrons with collections, programs, information, and services targeted to immigrant groups. The immigrants being served by libraries are from a vast array of backgrounds. According to the Urban Libraries Council, one in nine U.S. residents is foreign born, and in their survey of seventy-three public libraries, responding libraries estimated that their libraries served patrons from five to two hundred nationalities. More than three-fourths claimed thirty or more countries of origin among their patrons.1

Diversity is not only defined by nationality or native language. Immigrants within any given nationality might have different levels of literacy, different legal status in the United States, may come from rural or urban settings, and vary in their economic situations.2 With so much diversity, how are public libraries serving their patrons?

There is a vast body of literature on library service to immigrants over the past century. Renee Pokorny, in surveying the literature, stated that in more than one hundred years of service to immigrants, recurrent motifs in public library offerings and issues have included acculturation, citizenship, providing practical information on the United States, and selection.3 These topics are still commonly discussed. Literature from the past fifteen years included discussions of what libraries are offering to immigrants, what immigrants want and need, suggestions for improving library service to immigrants, and barriers to immigrant use of libraries. Each of these themes is discussed below.

Public Library Services for Immigrants
The libraries in the literature reviewed served their immigrant populations with collections in multiple languages, including Spanish and other language materials on bookmobiles. They offered bilingual help in the form of bilingual staff, information in languages other than English on library websites and in pamphlets, and multiple-language signage. Computer services included computer interfaces in Spanish, computer classes in Spanish, computer language labs, computer skills training, and access to e-mail and the Internet. In addition to the computer language labs, language and literacy training were made available through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and programs for conversation, reading and writing, and literacy tutoring. Foreign language and bilingual workshops and programs included book groups and poetry readings. Several libraries conducted bridge programs to help immigrants with coping skills or survival skills in their new coun-
try. Libraries also provided information on-and links to social services (particularly those geared toward immigrants) such as locations of immigration offices, immigration and selective-service forms, and study materials for the citizenship test. Additionally, libraries partnered with agencies that help immigrants in finding jobs, housing, health care, and other services that aid them becoming established in the United States.4 Of the seventy-three public libraries that the Urban Library Council surveyed in 2003, 93 percent had staff with multiple-language skills, 89 percent had library brochures and information in multiple languages, and 71 percent conducted staff training on providing multicultural customer service. Two-thirds reported ten or more languages in their collections, and two-thirds had multilingual signage.5 Serving immigrants, while not a new practice for U.S. public libraries, has become an important consideration in all facets of the library.

What Immigrants Want and Need
Several papers detailed what immigrants want and need from libraries. Sources of this information included immigrants themselves, library staff speaking from their experience of working with immigrants, and representatives speaking for immigrant communities. These wants and needs were predominately oriented toward practical help for becoming settled in the United States. Concerning immigration and citizenship, immigrant patrons wanted information on immigration law, location of immigration offices, and access to immigration forms. They wanted information on citizenship, including classes and study guides for the citizenship test. Language and literacy needs included ESL classes and tutors, self-help ESL materials, language instruction software, English conversation groups, and literacy education. Other educational needs included information on how to communicate with K–12 schools, how to help children adjust to U.S. school systems, help with schoolwork, and help with adult education such as teaching how to do library research, reading and writing reports, and help with completing their education. Immigrants wanted community information such as information on public transportation, how to obtain driver’s licenses, understanding banking, information on religious centers, and local family recreation. Community outreach and partnering with the community to develop programs for immigrants was encouraged. Specifically mentioned information needs included information on finding housing, tenants’ rights, information on other legal issues, health and healthcare, career planning, job-skills training, and information on finding jobs. Needed social service information included information on benefits, welfare rights, and other social services. Concerning the library itself, immigrant patrons expressed a desire for a welcoming environment, bilingual and bicultural staff, signage in multiple languages, current and relevant materials in the foreign language collections, bookmobiles with foreign language materials especially Spanish, and library programming in languages other than English. They wanted computer access including language instruction software, Spanish-language interfaces, and the Internet. Reading material in English as well as other languages, world news, ideas for places to go and things to do, and information on hobbies and interests were also mentioned. From the information in the literature it seems that libraries are offering services that are in line with what immigrant patrons want and need.6

Improving Services to Immigrants
Many articles detailed subjects that were in the highest demand from immigrant library users. Spanish-speaking patrons predominately wanted adult nonfiction books (especially how-to and self-help), videos, magazines, and children’s books. Some librarians stated that because many Spanish-speaking patrons have limited reading literacy in both Spanish and English, they attempt to acquire materials that are easy to read and contain graphics. Specific subjects of interest that were mentioned include family and parenting, carpentry, mechanics, self-help ESL tapes, legal how-to such as divorce and writing wills, immigration law, biographies, books about Hispanic culture and events, history, poetry, computer books, and spirituality.7 Su and Conaway reported that the elderly Chinese immigrants in their study were predominately interested in newspapers and magazines, as well as books on and information about topics such as ESL, welfare rights, religious groups, and family recreation.8 The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) recommended that libraries provide books for immigrants on ESL, citizenship/immigration, resources for tutors, and have dictionaries, novels, how-to books, periodicals, and newspapers in multiple languages.9

One of the most complete lists of suggestions for successfully serving immigrant library patrons is the USCIS booklet, Library Services for Immigrants: A Report on Current Practices. The result of a working group of representatives from public libraries, immigrant community-based organizations, and English-
Barriers to Immigrant Library Use

Barriers to public library use for immigrants include the perception of an unwelcome environment that gives patrons a sense of being outsiders. This is partially due to a lack of cultural sensitivity by staff. Cultural barriers to public library service include both verbal and nonverbal communication as well as library rules and policies. Some immigrants are suspicious of giving their personal information to the library for fear of being deported. Limited English-language speaking or reading skills can be complicated by a fear of trying to communicate in English; these immigrants are sometimes referred to as “linguistically isolated.” Online library catalogs require patrons to use both language and technology skills that they may not have. Inconvenient library locations or hours discourage library visits. Many immigrants are not used to the public library concept from their home countries and do not think of using the library, do not know where it is located, do not perceive a need for library use, and do not know about programs and services at the library. Some immigrants report that they are too busy to visit the library or that their work hours conflict with library hours.

From the literature it was postulated that immigrants, at least newly arrived immigrants, use the public library differently than non-immigrants. According to the literature, they use non-English as well as English-language material, attend programs and workshops such as ESL and literacy classes, use computers, and search for information on a variety of practical topics, particularly relating to jobs. They are less likely to use the library for entertainment purposes. Public libraries are commonly offering these services to immigrant patrons. Barriers faced by potential library patrons are predominately due to culture and language issues. The majority of the literature was based on a picture of Latino immigrants’ library use, with some information about Asian immigrants.

Research Method

This study uses federal data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) to examine types of library use by households of immigrants from different world regions and households of native-born U.S. citizens. In 2002, CPS included a supplementary questionnaire to its regular October data collection. Entitled “School Enrollment/Library Use Supplement,” it asked questions concerning whether people in households used public libraries, and how they used them. This multistage probability sample of U.S. civilian non-institutionalized persons living in households covered all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Data were gathered using structured, closed-ended questions.
The dataset used for this study was composed of households that claimed public library use in the past month. This was determined by the questions: “In the past month . . . has any member of your household used a public library or bookmobile for any reason?” If the answer was no, respondents were asked the following probe, “How about to borrow materials, take a class, to use computers, or for activities for children?” Households that had used the public library were asked a series of questions about types of use. These questions were worded, “Did this person use the library,” and then specific uses were asked about, such as, “. . . to use a computer or the Internet?” Exact question wording is reflected in the tables in the data analysis section. Out of 56,873 households that were asked whether they used a public library in the past month, 17,614 (31.0 percent) had done so. The research question for this study was: “Are there differences in types of use of U.S. public libraries by households of people from different world regions?”

Households were coded as immigrant households based on the immigrant status of the household adults. Library use was asked on a household level so it was not possible to determine how individual characteristics such as age or year of entry into the United States affected library use.

Data Analysis
The data analysis examined library use by immigrants from a number of world regions to determine if there were different trends for immigrants from different areas. Since the library-use questions were asked on a household level it was not possible to single newly arrived immigrants out from more established immigrants.

Materials and Programs
Table 1 details use of non-English language material, ESL classes, and literacy classes. As the literature predicted, immigrants were much more likely to use non-English language material and ESL programs than non-immigrants. Some of the highest users of non-English language materials, ESL programs, and literacy programs were households of immigrants from Central America/Mexico, South America, and for the programs, Africa. Among those least likely to use these materials and services were those from South Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Non-English language materials were the most likely of these three language/literacy items to be used by immigrant households, up to 31.1 percent,
although only Central America/Mexico (31.1 percent) and South America (27.8 percent) were at the high end of this use. Of other immigrant households, less than one-quarter borrowed materials in languages other than English. It was surprising that of immigrant households that had used the library in the past month so few had used non-English language materials.

To understand variance in use, some background information on the immigrant groups can be useful. For example, South Asia was one of the least likely immigrant groups to use non-English language materials or participate in ESL or literacy classes. Most of the South Asian immigrants in the study were from India, and 74.5 percent of these Indian adults had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Since English is often used as the language of instruction in many universities in India, these immigrants were likely to be capable English-language speakers and readers. European immigrants were also unlikely to have used ESL and literacy programs. This may be because the majority of European immigrants in the study (77.2 percent) arrived in the United States prior to 1989 and have had time to become established.

While it was interesting to see how some groups were more likely to use non-English language materials, ESL programs, and literacy programs than other groups, it was noteworthy that so few of the immigrant households actually reported using these materials and services. Up to 20 percent of immigrant households had used ESL programs, although only South America (20.4 percent) and Central America/Mexico (16.3 percent) had used them at a rate greater than 15 percent. The highest rates for using literacy programs were just around 10 percent, which means 90 percent of library-using households did not use literacy programs. Is that because the libraries, branches, or bookmobiles did not offer such services? Or were the services offered but not utilized? Since this applied to use in the month prior to the survey, it is possible that patrons had used such a program at one time but not recently or not on a continual basis? It is not possible from these data to determine why more immigrants did not use these materials and services.

**Computer/Internet Use**

CPS asked respondents if anyone in the household had used a computer or the Internet at the library in the past month. It can be seen in table 2 that many immigrant groups were much more likely to have used this library service than non-immigrants. African immigrant households were substantially more likely to have used the computer (52.4 percent) and taken computer classes (19.0 percent) during the month prior to the survey than other groups. Following African users, the most likely groups to have used the computer or taken computer classes were Caribbean (43.6 percent used the computer, 15.8 percent had taken classes), Middle Eastern (40.4 percent, 15.4 percent), Central American/Mexican (38.9 percent, 15.8 percent), and South American (38.9 percent, 13.0 percent). Slightly less likely were households from Southeast Asia (36.1 percent, 11.4 percent). Slightly more than one-quarter of non-immigrant households used a computer or the Internet at the library.

**Use of Library for School/Work**

Several of the articles in the reviewed literature noted that immigrants use the public library for job-related reasons such as job searching, job-training information, filling out electronic job applications, and attending programs about finding jobs. Table 3 shows that of households reporting library use in

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**Table 2. Computer Use by Households That Used the Library in the Past Month**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>To use a computer or the Internet</th>
<th>To learn how to use a computer or the Internet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia N=152</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the past month, few had used the public library “to get information to help find a job.” Only three immigrant groups had a 10 percent or higher likelihood of using the library for this purpose in the past month: African (16.7 percent), Middle Eastern (13.5 percent), and South Asian (10.9 percent). Library-user households were slightly more likely to use the library “for a work assignment or to keep up to date at work,” with Middle Eastern households reporting nearly 20 percent in this category, followed by African households at 16.7 percent. While job-related information is vital for those who need it, from these data it appears that the majority of immigrant patrons were not using the library for that purpose.

A few of the reviewed articles mentioned using the public library for education purposes. Discussion included helping children adjust to U.S. schools, helping with homework, and assisting adults with completing their educations. Table 3 shows that immigrant households were much more likely to use the library “for a school or class assignment” than they were for job-related pursuits. Households most likely to use the library for schoolwork were Middle Eastern (59.6 percent), Central American/Mexican (52.6 percent), and Caribbean (50.7 percent). These households were nearly twice as likely to use the library in this manner as non-immigrants (29.5 percent) or European (26.0 percent) households, which were least likely to use the library for education purposes. It is possible that the groups more likely to use the library for school work might be more likely to have children younger than eighteen years of age in the household.

### Use of Library Programming

Library programs for adults and children were widely discussed in the literature as being of particular interest to immigrant patrons. Data in table 4 indicate that programs or activities for children under the age of thirteen were attended by slightly more than one-quarter of immigrant households from the Middle East (28.8 percent) and Central America/Mexico (27.3 percent). Around one-fifth from South America (20.4 percent) and the Caribbean (18.6 percent) also attended these programs. Less than 17 percent of households from all other groups attended children's programs. Non-immigrants attended at a rate of 12.3 percent. Programs for teens thirteen to eighteen were attended by less than 14 percent of households from all groups, the most likely to attend were from Central America/Mexico (13.9 percent), Southeast Asia (12.7 percent), and Africa (11.9 percent). Non-immigrants attended programs for teenagers at a rate of 3.6 percent. CPS also asked about attendance of programs or activities for people age fifty-five and over, but since less than 6 percent of any group attended these programs the data were

### Table 3. Use for Work or School by Households That Used the Library in the Past Month

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“To get information to help find a job”</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia N=152</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“For a work assignment or to keep up to date at work”</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia N=152</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“For a school or class assignment”</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia N=152</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
not included in the table. From the literature, it was expected that “to attend a lecture, meeting, or discussion group” would have much higher rates of use among immigrant households than non-immigrant households, but less than 10 percent of any groups replied yes to this category of library use. Perhaps while library programs for immigrants are widely discussed in the literature, these programs are models but not widespread among public libraries. It is not possible to determine from these data whether libraries were not offering programs or whether programs were being offered but not attended by the majority of library users.

Table 5 details other general types of library use. Almost all households (82.9 to 90.4 percent) that used the public library reported that they did so to borrow materials. Since table 1 showed that only 7.6 to 31.0 percent of immigrant households were checking out non-English language materials, that suggests these immigrant households were borrowing materials in English. Up to two-thirds of households also reported using the public library “for enjoyment or hobbies,” with non-immigrant households leading this use at 65.8 percent. Half or more of all households except Central America/Mexico (46.5 percent) and Caribbean (45.0 percent) used the library for enjoyment or hobbies. Non-immigrant households were also most likely to use the library for personal use, at 28.9 percent compared to Central American/Mexican households at 14.1 percent, the least likely to use the library for information. This supports the assertion in the literature that Latino and Asian immigrants were more likely to get information from friends and family networks than from sources such as the library.17

In summary of the tables, the largest differences were among households on the following uses: “to use a computer or the Internet” (range of use 38.9 percentage points), “for a school or class assignment” (range of use 33.6 percentage points), and “to borrow materials in a language other than English” (range of use 27.4 percentage points).

Use Patterns by World Region
An alternate way of looking at the data is to examine household use by region. For immigrant households from Central America/Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean, library use for school or class assignments was high, as was use for hobbies, and for borrowing materials. Many of these households used a computer or the Internet. Households from Central America/Mexico and South America were likely to borrow materials in languages other than English, but those from the Caribbean were much less likely to do so. Since English is the official language in many Caribbean countries many immigrants from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Use of Programs by Households That Used the Library in the Past Month</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“For a program or activity for children under 13, such as a story hour”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia N=152</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“For a program or activity for teenagers ages 13 to 18”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia N=152</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To attend a lecture, meeting, or discussion group”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia N=152</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
this region are less likely to need non-English language materials. More than one-quarter of households from Central America/Mexico also used programs for children under the age of thirteen.

Immigrant households from Asia, divided in this study into East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, were likely to borrow materials and to use the library for enjoyment or hobbies. Households from Southeast Asia were much more likely to use the library for school or class assignments and to use the computer or Internet than households from East Asia or South Asia. South Asian households were more likely to use the library to find information for personal use than Southeast Asian or East Asian households. East Asian households were the only ones of this group to borrow non-English language materials at a rate higher than one-fifth.

While East European, African, and Middle Eastern immigrant households do not have geographic regions in common, they are discussed together since these immigrant groups are represented by a large number of newer immigrants. Of African immigrants in the dataset, 69.7 percent came to the United States in 1990 or later, as did 59.4 percent of East European immigrants and 44.9 percent of Middle Eastern immigrants. These three groups were most likely in the month prior to the survey to have borrowed materials and to have used the library for enjoyment or hobbies. African households were much more likely to have used the computer or Internet than Middle Eastern or East European households. Middle Eastern households were much more likely to have used the library for a school or class assignment and for programs for children under the age of thirteen than African or East European households. These households were only moderately likely to borrow non-English language materials or search for information for personal use.

The majority of European immigrants (77.1 percent) in this dataset came to the United States prior to 1990, making them less likely to be new immigrants. Their use patterns for most items were similar to those of non-immigrants. Ways in which these two groups differed were: non-immigrant households were more likely to use the library for enjoyment or hobbies, for information, and to use a computer or the Internet than European households. European households were slightly more likely to use non-English language materials compared to non-immigrants.

Overall, households that used public libraries in the past month used them similarly. The predominate activity of all households was “to borrow books, CDs, or tapes.” For ten out of the eleven regions examined, the top three activities were “to borrow books, CDs, or tapes,” “for enjoyment or hobbies,” and “for a school or class assignment.” Included in the top four activities were “to use a computer or the Internet” for nine

---

**Table 5. General Use by Households That Used the Library in the Past Month**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>East Europe N=94</th>
<th>South America N=108</th>
<th>South Asia N=119</th>
<th>Caribbean N=140</th>
<th>Central America/Mexico N=411</th>
<th>East Asia N=152</th>
<th>U.S. native N=15,375</th>
<th>Southeast Asia N=158</th>
<th>Africa N=42</th>
<th>Europe N=104</th>
<th>Middle East N=52</th>
<th>Caribbean N=140</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To borrow books, CDs, or tapes&quot;</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>85.6%</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;For enjoyment or hobbies&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle East N=52</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africa N=42</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
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<td>Europe N=104</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
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<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
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<tr>
<td>South America N=108</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
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<td>East Asia N=152</td>
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<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;To get information for personal use, such as consumer or health issues, investments, and so on&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. native N=15,375</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia N=119</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Europe N=94</td>
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<td>Southeast Asia N=158</td>
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<td>Africa N=42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe N=104</td>
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<td>East Asia N=152</td>
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<td>Caribbean N=140</td>
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<td>Middle East N=52</td>
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<td>Central America/Mexico N=411</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
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regions, and “to get information for personal use, such as consumer or health issues, investments, and so on” for two regions. In general, programs were the least likely library offerings to have been used in the past month. This might be due to programs being available on an occasional, rather than frequent, basis. It is not possible to determine from these data why more use was not made of programs. Included in the least likely library services to be used were “to work with a tutor or take a class to learn to read,” “to attend a lecture, meeting, or discussion group,” “to get information to help find a job,” and “for a program or activity for teenagers ages 13 to 18.”

Conclusion

In comparing these data analysis results to the assertions in the literature, immigrant households were less likely to use non-English language materials, attend library programs, for help finding a job, or to search for information, than the literature suggests. They were most likely to borrow books, tapes, and CDs, not specifically those in languages other than English; to pursue hobbies and entertainment; and use the library for educational pursuits. The difference in what the literature reported and what this study found may be due to the difference between newly arrived immigrants, most frequently discussed in the literature, and established immigrants. Because of the way these data were collected it was not possible to make that distinction in this analysis.

All libraries must make economically efficient decisions in allocating budget money. In conjunction with community profiles and consultation with representatives from immigrant communities, the data from this study can help public librarians to make effective collection development and planning decisions for serving the immigrant communities in their service districts by helping to predict how community user groups will use the library. While these data results can be used as general predictors, it is important to keep in mind that individuals or populations of immigrants in particular communities may not follow the patterns indicated by these data.

Further research on immigrant use of libraries needs to be done, particularly on African, Middle Eastern, East European, and Asian immigrants. While these immigrants are not as geographically dispersed in the United States as Latino immigrants, their library needs must be understood to be met by the public libraries that serve them.

References


Public Library Resources Used by Immigrant Households

5. Public Library Services to New Americans, 7.


8. Su and Conaway, “Information and a Forgotten Minority.”

9. USCIS, Library Services for Immigrants.

10. Ibid.


15. Su and Conaway, “Information and a Forgotten Minority.”


Competencies for librarians and consequently for curriculum development in library and information science (LIS) education have been discussed in the library literature and a number of competencies relevant to specific areas of service have been identified. Although there is no consistent definition of competency, nor do competencies documents evidence a universal structure, LIS literature reflects growing interest in the development and use of competencies. The authors studied the extent and nature of use of competencies documents by LIS schools, state libraries, and public libraries.

Literature Review
Competency-based evaluation, which relates life or job success to learning through demonstrable abilities and skills, has its genesis in the field of education. An approach to education for elementary and secondary education that gained popularity in the 1970s as a means for demonstrating greater accountability, the competency-based education movement was not without controversy. A key criticism was the widespread adoption of the term and procedures that lacked clear definition, conceptual clarity, outcome-based criteria, and analysis of the implications and impact of competency-based education programs.\(^1\) The approach, however, continued to thrive and the use of competencies has been adopted in business and management and in professional education.\(^2\) Carraccio, “realizing [that] medical education is on the brink of a major paradigm shift from structure- and process-based to competency-based education and measurement of outcomes,” conducted a review of medical literature 1970–2000 to determine the evolution and impact of competency-based professional education.\(^3\)
The literature of LIS reflects the same sort of definitional confusion and reflection as other disciplines, as well as their enthusiasm. Two excellent articles that previously appeared in Public Libraries offer a snapshot of the differing approaches to use and definition of competencies. Naylor, grounding his approach in business and management practice, argues that “core competencies are more than the traits of individuals . . . [They] are characteristics of the organization as a whole.” He goes on to outline the processes and advantages inherent in this organizational, synergistic definition of core competencies. Johnson, in a discussion of the Minnesota certification program, discusses various categories of competencies, asserting that the definition of competencies varies widely across articles and that the flexible meaning results in a broad spectrum of uses, from training to compensation. She argues that the practical and demonstrable nature of domain competencies, which focus on “skills required for success in a particular area of expertise [that] typically involve the demonstration of technical/expert knowledge in a profession, occupation, vocation, field of study, or process area,” are most valuable in certification programs for non-MLIS library workers.

Although formalized definitions and structural expectation may be varied, significant interest in competencies statements in LIS has been in evidence for the past two decades. The desire for such statements is spurred by the need to define required knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes of library workers at all levels. State libraries use competencies statements to guide education and certification programs for non-degreed library workers, many of whom are in administrative positions in public libraries. For example, the Western Council of State Libraries (WCSL) recently developed a set of core competencies for non-MLIS public library directors, an ambitious project supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. On the other end of the educational continuum, the American Library Association (ALA)/Allied Professional Association (APA) was established with the original intent of offering certification programs for post-MLIS specialties. The APA program certifies individuals, a departure from ALA's practice of accrediting MLIS programs. Certification requires identification, definition, and demonstration of competencies.

Interest in competencies for MLIS-credentialed librarians was evidenced by the 1999 ALA Conference on Professional Education call for the development of a core-competencies statement for library professionals. The resulting Task Force on Core Competencies developed a set of core competencies that has been presented widely in library forums and evolved as a result of this interaction. McKinney's analysis of the 2005 draft of the core competencies noted that these competencies were congruent with the subject areas identified in the ALA Standards for Accreditation and that the curricula of LIS schools currently address them. The response to the draft competencies by the Committee on Accreditation, however, reflected the same difficulties with definition and measurable outcomes pervasive in the literature of other disciplines. McKinney's report concludes:

The Committee recognized the importance of competencies that reflect the “knowledge, skills, and experience” that librarians and other information professionals need and expressed appreciation for the inclusive approach of the proposed core competencies. However, the Committee noted that if the proposed draft competencies were meant to reflect “an individual's capacity to perform a certain activity” as competencies are usually understood to do, the competency statements need to be rewritten to show how the knowledge acquired through a course may be used effectively.

As McKinney's article so aptly reflects, librarians typically do not engage in the in-depth examination of competencies one finds in education. There appears to be a generally accepted and intuitively obvious definition that competencies are the skills, knowledge, abilities, and experience that individuals require to do their jobs, but competencies statements sometimes lack the attention to measurement and demonstrable criteria found in other disciplines.

Nevertheless, library literature pays considerable attention to the development of competencies statements related to library and information services. Studies published since 2006 relate to competencies in management, technology, chat reference, and leadership, as well as core competencies for librarians and library practitioners. National library associations have issued or revised competencies statements related to service areas, library service populations, and types of libraries.

The Entry-Level Public Librarian Competency Statement, developed by a Public Library Association (PLA) Committee in 1994, was discussed in a “competencies colloquium” in Public Libraries and in several forums at ALA meetings. This competencies statement, which the authors continue to use in advising MLIS students, is particularly interesting in...
its structure. For each area of competence, responsibilities are assigned to the individual, the school, and the employing library. The statement was never formally adopted by PLA and has not been revised or updated since its creation.

**Study Purpose and Research Method**

The competencies project explored the nature and use of competencies documents in education and in practice, with particular attention to the last public library competencies developed for entry-level professionals by PLA. Specifically, this study was designed to determine whether the public library competencies document promulgated in 1994 is currently used in initial and continuing education activities conducted by various institutions concerned with the training and education of public librarians; to determine use of other national library association competencies documents; to develop recommendations regarding revision of existing competencies documents for public librarians; and to facilitate planning of education, certification, and continuing education activities of public librarians. This article reports on the aspects of the study related to extent and type of use of competencies documents.

The study employed several methods to study use of and attitudes about professional competencies developed and distributed by national organizations that support LIS professionals. These included a comparison of a variety of competencies documents, analysis of program presentations submitted to the ALA Committee on Accreditation, and three surveys.

**Content Analysis of Accreditation Documents**

Every school offering an ALA-accredited program in the United States and Canada was contacted and gave permission for the researchers to examine official accreditation documents submitted to ALA’s Committee on Accreditation. A content analysis of each school’s most recent program presentation on file at the Office for Accreditation at ALA headquarters in Chicago was conducted to determine whether and in what context the competencies documents were included in the program presentations with focus on the Mission, Goals, and Objectives and Curriculum section. These results are reported elsewhere.14

As a result of the analysis of program presentations, additional competencies statements were added to the initial list derived from the ALA Office for Accreditation website. This more extensive list was incorporated into the three surveys.

**Surveys**

A basic survey was developed and modified to target each of three constituent groups: deans or directors of LIS schools, state library development consultants, and public library directors. In each case, the researchers sent an e-mail letter that requested participation in the survey, provided an informed consent form, and directed participants to the survey, which was located at a secure website and took about twenty minutes to complete and return online. There were five sections in each of the state and public library surveys:

1. a question about use of the public library competencies statement;
2. a table listing national library association competencies documents with options to select the manner in which the document was used. The same statements were included in each survey, but the functional options were adapted to reflect the responsibilities of the type of institution. Use figures were determined by subtracting “do not use” responses from the total number of responses;
3. a parallel table that allowed each group of participants to add additional statements;
4. a question that asked the respondent to indicate the value of competencies documents in their own educational and training activities; and
5. a request for general comments.

Deans or directors of all LIS schools in the United States and Canada with ALA-accredited master’s programs received surveys that focused on the use of competencies statements in curriculum planning. These findings were analyzed in the context of the content analysis of program presentations.

State library development officers were identified in all state libraries. Each received a survey to assess the use of competencies documents in developing standards of practice, certification requirements, and programs for training and professional education. Surveys were sent to public library directors in a stratified (by size) random sample of libraries serving service populations of 25,000 or greater. Although the 1,954 public libraries that meet this criterion represent a minority of public libraries (21.4 percent), they serve a majority of the population and employ the majority of professional librarians. A sample of
516 public libraries was drawn utilizing data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The distribution of public libraries in the population and sample, as well as response rate, is shown in table 1. The public library survey was developed to determine the extent to which competency statements are used in hiring, evaluation, or in planning for professional development.

Results of the Public Library Survey
As reflected in table 1, only sixty-three of 516 (10.2 percent) of the public library directors contacted responded. The responses were fairly representative of size distribution and reflected a balance of geographic regions. The majority (fifty-two) were completed by library directors/deputies or assistant directors. Two respondents had “manager” titles (office manager and library services manager). Two surveys were completed by respondents with titles indicating primary responsibility for staff development (“staff development coordinator; training and O.D. manager”) and seven with titles in human resources or personnel departments. The nine with specialized training or human-resources responsibility all represented libraries with service populations of 100,000 or greater; the majority (five) were in the 500,000 to 999,999 population category, with two in the 250,000 to 499,999 category and one each in the 100,000 to 149,999 and the 1,000,000 and greater categories.

Use of Listed Competencies Statements in Public Libraries
Results indicate that national library professional association competencies are rarely used in public libraries (Table 2). Use figures were calculated by subtracting the percentage of “do not use” responses from 100 percent. A majority (69.8 percent) of respondents to the public library survey indicated that they did not use the 1994 PLA Entry Level Public Librarian Competency Statement. Only two statements, both related to youth services, were used by 20 percent or more of the respondents. Fifteen (23.8 percent) indicated use of Young Adults Deserve the Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth (Young Adult Library Services Association [YALSA]) and 14 (21.8 percent) indicated use of Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries (Association for Library Service to Children [ALSC]).

Librarians most frequently use the PLA (twelve, 19 percent) and YALSA (seven, 11.1 percent) competencies documents to identify areas for staff development and training. This was the second most frequent use noted for the ALSC competencies (six, 9.5 percent). An equal number of respondents indicated that they used ALSC’s Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries (six, 9.5 percent) in writing position descriptions. This was also the second most frequent use noted for the public libraries competencies document (eight, 12.7 percent), and the third for YALSA’s Young Adults Deserve the Best (five, 7.9 percent).

Table 1. Distribution of Population, Sample, and Response of Public Libraries Serving Populations of 25,000 or More

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>&lt; 25,000</th>
<th>25,000 to 49,999</th>
<th>50,000 to 99,999</th>
<th>100,000 to 249,999</th>
<th>250,000 to 499,999</th>
<th>500,000 to 999,999</th>
<th>1,000,000 or more</th>
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<td>Total Number</td>
<td>7184</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>Percent of all Libraries</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
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<td>3.6%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
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<td>Sample Number</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Sample % of Libraries</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Number</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Responses</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
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<td>Educational Policy Statement</td>
<td>Nature of Use (Check all that apply.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Association of Law Libraries, AALL Guidelines for Graduate Programs in Law Librarianship</td>
<td>Do not use* 96.8% (61) To write position descriptions 0 To evaluate applicants for positions 0 To assess job performance 0 To identify areas for staff development and training 0</td>
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<td>American Association of School Librarians, ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Programs for School Library Media Specialist Preparation</td>
<td>95.2% (60)</td>
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<td>American Society for Information Science and Technology, ASIST Educational Guidelines</td>
<td>Do not use* 93.7% (59)</td>
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<td>Association for Library Service to Children, Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries</td>
<td>Do not use* 77.8% (49) To write position descriptions 9.5% (6) To evaluate applicants for positions 6.3% (4) To assess job performance 11.1% (7) To identify areas for staff development and training 9.5% (6)</td>
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<td>Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada, Achieving School Literacy through Quality School Library Programs: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada</td>
<td>95.2% (60)</td>
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<td>Association of College and Research Libraries, Education for Professional Academic Librarianship (C&amp;RL News no. 9 [Oct. 1992], 590-91)</td>
<td>Do not use* 92.1% (58) To write position descriptions 1.6% (1) To evaluate applicants for positions 1.6% (1) To assess job performance 0 To identify areas for staff development and training 0</td>
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<td>Medical Library Association, Platform for Change: The Educational Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association</td>
<td>Do not use* 93.7% (59) To write position descriptions 1.6% (1) To evaluate applicants for positions 1.6% (1) To assess job performance 0 To identify areas for staff development and training 0</td>
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<td>Music Library Association, Core Competencies and Music Librarians</td>
<td>Do not use* 93.7% (59)</td>
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<td>Public Library Association Education for Public Librarians Committee, Entry Level Public Librarian Competency Statement (Public Libraries 33 [Mar./Apr. 1994]: 82+)</td>
<td>To write position descriptions 69.8% (44) To evaluate applicants for positions 12.7% (8) To assess job performance 11.1% (7) To identify areas for staff development and training 11.1% (12)</td>
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<td>Society of American Archivists, Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies</td>
<td>Do not use* 92.1% (58) To write position descriptions 1.6% (1) To evaluate applicants for positions 3.2% (2) To assess job performance 0 To identify areas for staff development and training 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Libraries Association, Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century</td>
<td>Do not use* 93.7% (59) To write position descriptions 3.2% (2) To evaluate applicants for positions 1.6% (1) To assess job performance 0 To identify areas for staff development and training 1.6% (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Adult Library Services Association, Young Adults Deserve the Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth</td>
<td>Do not use* 76.2% (48) To write position descriptions 7.9% (5) To evaluate applicants for positions 6.3% (4) To assess job performance 9.5% (6) To identify areas for staff development and training 11.1% (7)</td>
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*Nonsamples are not included in “Do not use.” Percentages may not equal 100%.
Both functional options related to evaluation, “to assess job performance” and “to evaluate applicants for positions,” were selected by seven (11.1 percent) of the respondents as uses for the PLA Entry Level Public Librarian Competency Statement. In contrast, assessing job performance was the most frequently selected use of the ALSC statement (seven, 11.1 percent) and second for the YALSA competencies (six, 9.5 percent). Evaluating applicants for positions was the least frequently selected option for the ALSC (four, 6.3 percent) and YALSA (four, 6.3 percent) competencies statements.

Additional Documents Named by Public Library Respondents

Respondents were provided the opportunity to list additional competencies documents that they used but that were not included on the survey list. The documents are listed below as provided by respondents; no attempt has been made to verify titles or source information. Not all of the additional documents listed are competencies statements as defined within this study.

Of the thirteen additional statements listed, three are from national organizations: ALA-accredited master of library and information science; National Aeronautics and Space Administration Action Plan outline; and PLA Core Competencies. Six are state-level documents: Arizona State Library Guidelines; California Librarians in the 21st Century: Core Professional and Personal Competencies (the only document cited by three respondents); Connecticut State Library—Public Library Standards; Top Mgt. [Management] Team Competencies Developed for Public Librarians (Minnesota); NJLA Professional Competencies; and Ohio Library Council Competencies. Four local documents listed include: Town of Greenwich Job Descriptions; Youth Services Competencies Checklist/Omaha PL; Basic Performance Competencies for All Library Employees/Multnomah County Library; and local computer competencies. One respondent listed “other library job descriptions.”

Of the nine respondents who provided additional statements, six provided only one statement; two provided three; and one provided four. Those respondents who provided multiple additional documents appear to have little in common. The clusters of documents follow.

Cluster one included three statements: NASA Action Plan outline; Arizona State Library Guidelines; and local computer competencies. A respondent from this cluster, the director of a library with a service population between 25,000 and 49,999, ranked competency documents as “absolutely essential in training and continuing education programs” (Question 4). The response included a general comment: “I would appreciate greater information in this area.”

Cluster two included three statements: Top Management Team Competencies Developed for Public Librarians (Minnesota); California Librarians in the 21st Century: Core Professional and Personal Competencies; and Basic Performance Competencies for All Library Employees/[Specific County] Library. The respondent in this case is the director of a library with a service population between 250,000 and 499,999 and ranked competency documents as “somewhat useful in training and continuing education programs” (Question 4). There was no general comment.

Cluster three included four statements, two of which were related specifically to job descriptions: PLA Core Competencies; Ct. State Library—Public Library Standards; [City name] Job Descriptions; and Other Public Library Job Descriptions. Cluster three’s respondent is the director of a library with a service population between 50,000 and 99,999 who ranked competency documents as “somewhat useful in training and continuing education programs” (Question 4). In the general comments section, the director noted that competencies “are useful as part of the professional ‘tool box.’”

Utility of National Library Professional Association Documents

The majority (57.1 percent) of public library respondents found competencies statements in some way useful in training and continuing education programs. One respondent (1.6 percent) found competency statements “absolutely essential,” and another thirteen (20.6 percent) found them “very useful.” Twenty-five respondents, a very sizeable minority (39.7 percent), reported that the statements were “not at all useful in training and continuing education programs.” These summary responses about the utility of competencies documents are consistent with the responses regarding use of specific documents. There appears to be no correlation between the size of library service population and perceived utility of competencies documents in training and continuing education.
General Comments from Public Librarians

Public librarians provided comments that shed light on their usage of competencies documents, often explaining obstacles that prevented use. The comments most frequently appearing cited a lack of awareness or limited exposure to competencies documents: “I was unaware of the existence of Public Library Competencies statements”; “I have been a public library director for more than fifteen years and I am sorry to say that I was unaware that these competency and educational policy statements exist. Participating in this survey has been very helpful to me and I will examine these statements.” Of those who cited lack of awareness, several indicated that they hoped or expected that such statements were used by library schools or state libraries.

Several librarians explained that they did not use competencies statements due to the limited independence inherent in municipal or state governance. One noted,

As part of a local government our evaluation forms are exactly the same as for all other departments (like “Roads and Bridges,” “County Auditor’s Office,” and “Sheriff’s Department”) too broad and too useless . . . Our job descriptions must conform to those of the other County Departments also.

Another said,

I do think there’s value in professional competency statements. However . . . public libraries are subject to the position descriptions for librarians that are developed by the [State] Civil Service Department . . . As of now, public library directors have very little input on the way those position descriptions are developed by Civil Service.

Some library directors cited time or cost issues. Only one respondent from a municipal library commented negatively on competencies statements themselves, and this was combined with financial restraints. She asserted that

Most of the time, professional competency statements are out of touch with real-world public librarianship. They tend toward the pie-in-the-sky competencies that can only be achieved with substantial budgets. I use them only to help me create new job descriptions, and then I only use them to help me make the description sound important enough for the city council to fund. However, in ten years of directing a library, I have discovered the librarians who meet the core competencies think that a starting pay under $40,000 is beneath them. So we hire the enthusiastic applicants and train them for the jobs. It’s all we can afford to do.

A number of the public library directors explained that they developed their own local competencies; of these, several noted that they used national or state level documents as background. One public librarian from a larger library commented on a problem with using competencies statements: “Competency statements that set out what is required of a worker are most effective the lower down the list you go, for the obvious reason that there is less ambiguity in the position. (I mean Library Clerks versus professional Librarians.)”

Results of the State Library Development Consultants Survey

The U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (Census Bureau) includes nine (18 percent) states in the Northeast region, twelve (24 percent) in the Midwest, twenty (34 percent) in the South, and thirteen (26 percent) in the West. Of the fifty state library development officers contacted for the survey, twenty-three (46 percent) responded. Three (13 percent) were from libraries in the Northeast, seven (30.4 percent) in the Midwest, six (26 percent) in the South, and seven (30.4 percent) in the West. These figures suggest a fairly balanced distribution, although libraries in the Northeast and South are slightly underrepresented and those in the Midwest and Western region are slightly overrepresented.

Use of Listed Competencies Statements in State Libraries

The surveys included a list of competencies statements identical to that in the public libraries survey. Respondents were asked to select as many responses as applicable from these choices of function: do not use; to write certification standards; to assist libraries in developing position descriptions; to identify areas for continuing education and training; and other (please explain).

No competencies statement was used by a majority of the state library respondents. Use figures reported here were calculated by subtracting the “do not use” responses from total number of respondents. Actual responses are included in table 3. The most frequently used of the listed national competencies statement was the ALSC Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries (47.8 percent),
followed by the YALSA Young Adults Deserve the Best (43.5 percent), PLA Entry Level Public Librarian Competency Statement (39.1 percent), American Association of School Librarians ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Programs for School Library Media Specialist Preparation (26.1 percent), and SLAs Special Library Association's Competencies for Information Professionals in the 21st Century (21.7 percent).

The use most frequently identified for each of these documents is “to identify areas for continuing education and training.” Eight (34.8 percent) respondents selected this use for the PLA and ALSC statements, two (8.7 percent) for the AASL and YALSA statements, and one (4.3 percent) for the SLA statement. The other two options, “to write certification standards” or “to assist libraries in developing position descriptions,” were chosen by two or fewer respondents as ways in which they used the competencies statements.

Additional Documents Named by State Library Consultants

Respondents were asked to provide the names and promulgating bodies of competencies statements that they used, but that did not appear in the list of statements provided. Statements are listed here as they were provided by respondents; no attempt has been made to determine the formal titles of the documents to which they refer. The authors have assumed that all mentions of the WCSL core competencies refer to the Library Practitioner Core Competencies document and its antecedents.

Ten consultants provided sixteen responses when queried about additional competencies documents. Four national or regional competencies were listed: PLA “for results” series; OCLC Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources; OCLC Environmental Scan; and the WCSL competencies. With mention by five respondents, the WCSL competencies (including one reference to its antecedent “A Library Education Plan for Western North America”) was the only document to be listed by more than one state library consultant. A number of respondents listed state-level standards documents, including the Ohio Public Library Standards; Oklahoma Certification Manual for Public Librarians; Minnesota Public Libraries; and Tennessee Minimum Standards for Non-Metropolitan Libraries. State-level school library media standards were clearly important and cited by several consultants: Alaska Library/Information Standards; Linking for Learning: The Illinois School Library Media Program Guidelines; Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs; and Recommended Standards for Information and Technology Literacy (Minnesota).

Of the ten respondents who provided additional statements, seven provided only one statement; the remainder provided two, three, and four, respectively. In each case, the consultant included state-level standards for public libraries, and each found educational policy statements “very useful in planning certification and continuing education programs.” The clusters follow.

Cluster one included two statements: Oklahoma Certification Manual for Public Librarians and the “Western Council’s certification standards.” Cluster two included three state-level standards documents: Minnesota Standards for Effective School Library Media Programs (Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO) in cooperation with Minnesota State Library agency, 2000), Recommended Standards for Information and Technology Literacy (MEMO, 2004); and Standards for Minnesota Public Libraries, Public Library Goals Review Task Force, (State Library Agency, 1996). The four statements in cluster three included two promulgated by OCLC: OCLC Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources and OCLC Environmental Scan. Another national level document, the PLA . . . For Results series, was included, as well as the state-level Tennessee Minimum Standards for Non-Metropolitan Public Libraries.
### Table 3. Use of Statements Reported by State Libraries

N = 23  
% = percent of respondents indicating that type of use. (Number) = number indicating that use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Policy Statement</th>
<th>Do not use*</th>
<th>To write certification standards</th>
<th>To assist libraries in developing position descriptions</th>
<th>To identify areas for continuing education and training</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Association of Law Libraries, AALL Guidelines for Graduate Programs in Law Librarianship</strong></td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Association of School Librarians, ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Programs for School Library Media Specialist Preparation</strong></td>
<td>73.9% (17)</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Society for Information Science and Technology, ASIST Educational Guidelines</strong></td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association for Library Service to Children, Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries</strong></td>
<td>52.2% (12)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>34.8% (8)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada, Achieving School Literacy through Quality School Library Programs: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada</strong></td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association of College and Research Libraries, Education for Professional Academic Librarianship (C&amp;RL News no. 9 [Oct. 1992], 590-91)</strong></td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical Library Association, Platform for Change: The Educational Policy Statement of the Medical Library Association</strong></td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music Library Association, Core Competencies and Music Librarians</strong></td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Library Association Education for Public Librarians Committee, Entry Level Public Librarian Competency Statement (Public Libraries 33 [Mar./Apr. 1994]: 82+)</strong></td>
<td>60.9% (14)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>34.8% (8)</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Society of American Archivists, Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies</strong></td>
<td>82.6% (19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Libraries Association, Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century</strong></td>
<td>78.3% (18)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Adult Library Services Association, Young Adults Deserve the Best: Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth</strong></td>
<td>56.5% (13)</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>8.7% (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nonresponses are not included in “Do not use.” Percentages may not equal 100%.
Utility of Educational Policy Statements
Asked generally about the use of competencies statements in certification and continuing education activities, 86.9 percent of the state library respondents indicated that they found such statements of at least some use, with only one respondent (4.3 percent) finding them “absolutely essential.” Ten (43.5 percent) indicated that educational policy statements were “very useful” and another nine (39.1 percent) found that competencies statements were “not at all useful” in their work in the areas of certification and continuing education. One (4.3 percent) of the state library consultants did not respond to the question.

General Comments from State Library Consultants
Of thirteen state consultants who responded with general comments, five mentioned the WSCL competencies for non-MLIS librarians. The repetition of this set of competencies suggests the primary focus on certification and educational opportunities to enable non-degreed directors and staff (library practitioners) to manage their libraries in an effective manner.

Four of the respondents are based in states without LIS schools; of these, two specifically mentioned the rural nature of the state and the lack of MLIS-credentialed personnel. One state library consultant who cited the WSCL competencies reinforced the importance of basic practical management skills:

The rural public library practitioner needs a real-world set of skills to run the local library. They are typically not skills currently taught at the MLS degree level, like outcome-based evaluation or strategic planning . . . Rural library directors need to know how to develop a budget and handle personnel, including evaluation, hiring, and firing. They also need a sophisticated set of political skills. I don't see those skills explicitly listed in the public library competencies. They need to be, not theoretical, rather, real world, in order for the competencies to truly work and aid the rural library directors in doing their jobs.

It should be noted that the PLA document is more than ten years old and is geared to entry-level library professionals, not directors. The focus is on core knowledge of librarianship and library services, not management. In recognition of the need for advanced-level management skills, PLA has developed a Public Library Administrator Certification currently offered through ALA’s Allied Professional Association.

Discussion: Comparing Responses from Schools, State Libraries, and Public Libraries
Figure 1 graphically compares use of those competencies statements listed on the surveys by institutional setting. LIS schools use competencies statements most frequently and use a broader array covering a variety of subject specialties. This is not unexpected, given the mission and responsibility of schools offering MLIS programs as stated in the Standards for Accreditation. Use of competencies documents is explicitly encouraged, as evidenced by the list of such documents on the ALA’s Office for Accreditation webpage. State libraries also serve a variety of clienteles and their missions may vary among states. They use a variety of statements to support training and education activities and certification programs that, while focusing on practical applications, serve as the primary educational experience for non-MLIS library administrators. It is not unexpected that public librarians, who are naturally focused on a single type of library, do not use as great a variety of competencies statements.

What is, perhaps, unexpected is that public librarians are the least likely of the three groups to use the PLA Entry Level Public Librarians Competency Statement and other applicable competencies documents, such as the ALSC Competencies for Serving Children in Public Libraries. It appears from our
findings that competencies documents may be reflective of practice, but are not extensively embraced by practice. Public library respondents often expressed lack of awareness of national competencies statements in general and the PLA document in particular. Although none of the respondents suggested it, it seems plausible that the emphasis on community-based planning and attention to local needs that is integral to the PLA planning documents, together with organizational structures, reinforces development of these local competencies statements in lieu of reliance on national level documents.

Public librarians also often explained that they were constrained by local circumstances, including hiring and evaluation practices dictated by local governments or preexisting job descriptions. Constraints, particularly the lack of resources in small and rural libraries, were mentioned by public librarians and by state library consultants.

The difference in perceptions of utility of core competencies documents among schools, state libraries, and public libraries is striking, but consistent with indications of use. LIS educators in MLIS programs find competencies statements most useful while public library directors most frequently found that they were only somewhat useful or not useful at all.

While 16.7 percent of school respondents indicated that national competencies statements were “essential” in curriculum planning, only 4.3 percent of state library consultants found them “essential” in identifying areas for continuing education and training, and only 1.65 percent of public libraries found them “essential” in training and continuing education programs. Schools (58.3 percent) and state libraries (43.5 percent) most frequently selected the “very useful” option followed by “somewhat useful” (39.7 percent and 39.1 percent, respectively). Of public library respondents, 34.9 percent selected “somewhat useful” and 20.6 percent selected “very useful.” The most frequently selected option by public librarians was “not at all useful” (39.7 percent), an option selected by only 8.7 percent of state library consultants and none of the LIS school respondents. This comparison is represented graphically in figure 2.

Figure 2. Perceptions of Utility by Institution

Conclusion: Trickle Down Utility
It may seem ironic that LIS schools use competencies documents in curriculum planning as representations of priorities in practice, while those engaged in practice do not appear to use or value such statements. In other ways, however, it seems almost predictable. Schools are charged with creating a curriculum that is reflective of widely accepted principles, general skills, and basic concepts that serve as a foundation for adaptation and lifelong learning in professional practice. It is natural that overarching national statements would be useful in curriculum planning to meet current and future needs of the profession. State library consultants are often charged with certification of non-MLIS library workers and administrators. As noted in the introduction to the WCSL core competencies statement and in comments from some state library respondents, there is also recognition of a dichotomy between practitioner and professional, with state documents emphasizing practical application. State library consultants are likely to use national competencies as background in developing state-level expectations.

Public librarians have expressed their interest in competencies statements that have been brought to their attention by this study. While they may have been unaware of these documents or lack time and resources to integrate competencies statements into local operations, they have also expressed their expectations that competencies statements are used by those who function at higher levels in providing educational opportunities and support services for their libraries. It seems likely that public librarians, although they may not directly use formal national competencies statements, nevertheless are influenced by them and recognize their value.
Competencies documents can be useful to the three major institutions that strive to provide high levels of service to public library constituents. Although use of specific documents and perceptions of their utility may vary, the concept of competencies statements is well accepted. Consensus on specifics may be elusive, but agreement on expectations and goals expressed in these documents can serve as a unifying principle for the profession that results in more effective organizations, better-prepared library practitioners and professionals, and an enhanced level of public library service for all citizens.

References and Notes
5. Ibid., 108.
10. Ibid., 77.
A fundamental concept in a democratic society is privacy. Privacy is the right of an individual to keep information about personal and professional life from disclosure, especially to government and commercial enterprises, and to remain free from surveillance except as authorized under provisions of law. The idea of privacy is that each individual controls what information they are willing to share with or release to others. Kranich stated that, “for democracy to flourish, citizens need free and open access to information.” As libraries are an important part of a democracy and are built on the concepts of freedom of information and freedom to read, it is imperative that libraries do everything within their power to protect the privacy of a patron’s library records.

Self-Service Holds
Libraries offer a wealth of services to their patrons. One particular service is the ability for patrons to place holds and request that materials be delivered to a specific branch or library. In recent years, some libraries have moved to the concept of a self-service hold area. The self-service hold area is accessible by the public so that library patrons may enter the area on their own, locate the materials they have requested, and proceed to the circulation counter to check out those materials to their own accounts. This shift to the self-service hold model versus maintaining the hold materials in a location not accessible by the public has occurred for a variety of reasons including lack of space, lack of staff or funding, and believing it is an added convenience for library patrons. In a self-service hold area, the patron is no longer required to approach the circulation desk, present a library card, and ask the staff member to retrieve hold items from a secure, private area. The patron can simply retrieve the item and check it out at the circulation desk or at a self-service checkout station. While the self-service hold area may be arranged in a number of ways, generally the materials are placed on shelves in alphabetical order by the name of the patron requesting the item. In addition, the materials often bear a label or receipt that displays the name of the patron who has requested the item so that patrons can more easily locate their hold items.

As a result of this practice, any person—a library patron, a curiosity seeker, or a government official—can enter the library, go directly to the self-service hold area, and search through the items to see what others are requesting and reading. This means your nosy neighbor could scan through your hold items to determine...
whether the rumor that you are adopting a child or filing for a divorce is true. It means that any person using the library can peruse the self-service hold area to see if anyone is reading something controversial that could potentially be used against them. More crucially, it allows an FBI agent (perhaps believing that any person checking out a book about Osama bin Laden or radical Islam is a terrorist) to scan through the hold items to determine if anyone is reading material on a watch list. It also means a government official can enter an individual’s local library branch to potentially discover information about that person without having to engage in the process of obtaining a subpoena. Ultimately, it means the patron’s requests—and reading, viewing, or listening habits—are no longer private.

Library Policies Regarding Privacy

The American Library Association (ALA), through its Code of Ethics, has established general ethical guidelines for all librarians, library trustees, library staff, and other information-providing professionals.4 ALA specifically addresses its position on and commitment to protecting library patrons’ privacy. Article III of the Code of Ethics states, “We protect each library user’s right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted.”5 While many libraries choose to adopt ALA’s Code of Ethics and its privacy statement, other libraries draft and publish their own privacy guidelines.

The Denver (Colo.) Public Library has posted its own privacy statement on its website: “Your records are strictly confidential. At the Denver Public Library, we go the extra step to ensure that your records remain your business and no one else’s.”6 It goes on to state, “We give your hold/reserve information only to you. Specific details on your hold items will not be given to your answering machine, roommate, or anyone else.”7 The Free Library of Philadelphia states on its website that, “Protecting your privacy is important to us at the Free Library of Philadelphia. We believe that every individual should be able to seek knowledge freely from any source—without the scrutiny or judgment of others.”8 It continues, “We protect your right to privacy by: divulging no information about your personal research or reading preferences.”9 The Seattle Public Library adopted a Confidentiality of Library Borrower Information policy that states:

It is the policy of the Seattle Public Library to protect the privacy of those who use the Library.

Staff members and volunteers shall protect information about Library borrowers, their requests for information and materials, the online sites and resources they access, and their loan transactions, and shall not transmit such information to individuals or to any private or public agency without an order from a court of competent jurisdiction, or as otherwise required by law.10

Whether a library has adopted ALA’s Code of Ethics or its own privacy policy, it is apparent from these examples that maintaining the confidentiality of patrons’ records is of the utmost importance to many libraries. While the privacy guidelines set forth in ALA’s Code of Ethics are not legally enforceable, these positions are a means of assuring patrons that the library will do everything in its power to keep library records private and confidential. Yet, when a library engages in the practice of self-service holds, it is clearly contravening the library’s commitment to the patron’s privacy and its own published policies.

Protection of Library Records

No federal statute or law exists to specifically guarantee the privacy of library records. It is generally at the state level that laws may offer some type of privacy protection for them. Currently, there are forty-eight states that have enacted some type of law that protects the privacy of a patron’s library records, whether as a stand-alone statute or as an exception to the state’s open records act.11 These laws typically protect the library patron’s registration and circulation records from being disclosed.12 Three states in particular—Arkansas, Colorado, and New York—provide strong privacy laws in regard to the protection of library records.13

In the Arkansas Code Annotated, sections 13-2-701 through 13-2-704 govern library records. The statute states that, “Library records which contain names or the personally identifying details regarding the patrons of public, school, academic, and special libraries and library systems supported in whole or in part by public funds shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed except as permitted by this subchapter.”14 Library records include any document or information that identify the patron as having requested, used, or obtained specific materials from the library.15 The Arkansas statute only allows for the disclosure of library record information in very limited circumstances such as disclosing the information to the actual patron, to any person who has
provided the library with the informed written consent of the patron, or to a law enforcement agency or civil court in conjunction with a search warrant.\textsuperscript{16} Any person who knowingly violates these statutory provisions is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be subject to a fine of not more than $200, thirty days in jail, or both.\textsuperscript{17}

Section 24-90-119 of the \textit{Colorado Revised Statutes} specifically addresses the issue of privacy of library records. This statute states that, "[A] publicly supported library shall not disclose any record or other information that identifies a person as having requested or obtained specific materials or service or as otherwise having used the library."\textsuperscript{18} In addition, the statute goes on to state that these types of records may only be disclosed under limited circumstances, such as when necessary for the operation of the library, upon written consent of the library patron, or pursuant to a subpoena, court order, or as otherwise required by law.\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, a person, whether a library official, employee, or volunteer, who discloses this type of information in violation of the statute, commits a class 2 petty offense and may be punished by a fine of not more than $300.\textsuperscript{20}

In New York, library records are governed by section 4509 of the \textit{Civil Practice Law and Rules}, which states that, "Library records, which contain names or other personally identifying details regarding the users of public, free association, school, college and university libraries, and library systems of this state . . . shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed."\textsuperscript{21} Library records include records regarding circulation of materials and interlibrary loan transactions.\textsuperscript{22} Similar to Arkansas and Colorado, library records in New York may be disclosed in limited situations, such as for the proper operation of the library, upon the request or consent of the patron, or pursuant to a subpoena or court order.\textsuperscript{23}

**Violation of State Privacy Laws Regarding Library Records**

Any library engaging in self-service hold practices in Arkansas, Colorado, and New York is clearly in violation of their respective state library statutes because they are releasing library records to the public without qualifying under one of the limited disclosure exceptions. The same would also hold true in most other states where the state has adopted some type of law regarding the confidentiality of library records. By way of example, in Colorado, placing hold items in public view with receipts or labels that identify the name of the user clearly violates CRS 24-90-119. This type of patron information disclosure does not fall within one of the exceptions listed in the statute. As a result, the library has violated the law, and the person who disclosed the information and made it available in violation of the statute is potentially subject to up to a $300 fine for each instance of a violation. In Arkansas, a library that displays personally identifying patron information in conjunction with a self-service hold area would be in violation of the state statute and could be subject to a fine of up to $200 and/or thirty days in jail per offense.

While a library may make an argument that patrons implicitly consent to the release of their personal information when they pick up an item from the self-service hold area, this is a tenuous argument at best. Such patrons have not explicitly consented to the release of their private library record information simply because they have requested a hold item be delivered to a library that maintains a self-service hold area. In addition, they most likely have no choice in how the hold items are maintained by the library.

Another potential argument that a library may make in order to justify this violation of a patron’s confidential information is that the self-service hold area is necessary for the operation of the library. However, this is another difficult argument for the library to stand on as it does not seem reasonable that a library would require a self-service hold area in order to operate. Additionally, any argument that the library may make to validate its self-service hold area would most likely violate any privacy policy statement that such library had adopted.

**Patron’s Expectation of Privacy**

The library is a place where individuals should be free from intrusion into their privacy except in limited circumstances such as explicit patron consent or a subpoena or court order. If a person does not have an expectation that the hold items requested through the library are kept confidential, then that individual might not request and read a book for fear of disclosure of his or her reading habits to the community or society at large. In the alternative, the patron may feel forced to go directly to where the material is located to check it out in order to avoid having that material delivered to a local branch and displayed in a self-service hold area. In either case, the library patron’s ability to request material is impeded and infringed upon, and the patron’s access to information has been limited or made more difficult. When patrons must be concerned with who will know what
they are requesting from the library on any given day, the fundamental concepts of our democratic society—freedom of information and an expectation of privacy—are further eroded.

The federal government has already allowed library records to be accessed through use of the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court process and the USA PATRIOT Act, which have the potential to result in the invasion of library patrons’ confidential information. Now, courtesy of many libraries and their use of self-service holds, the government need not even turn to its legally sanctioned avenues to garner information about an individual’s reading habits. The FBI or any other agency can simply walk into a library that provides a self-service hold area and peruse the shelves to see if any individual in the community is requesting an item that the government views as offensive or related to terrorism. Additionally, any person can enter that library and discern what the patrons who use that library and its self-service holds are requesting and use that information in any manner.

Conclusion
Librarians must be willing to fight for the privacy of their patrons’ library records and information. Libraries and their administrators may believe and argue that convenience and lack of space are legitimate rationales for providing self-service hold areas, but they are certainly not justifications for violating library patrons’ privacy and exposing their reading, viewing, or listening habits to potentially any person who enters that specific library. Librarians must bring the issue of how self-service hold areas violate a patrons’ privacy to light and force such areas to be dismantled or maintained in a way that patrons’ personally identifying information is not disclosed to the public. 

References
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 175.
15. Ibid., sec. 13-2-701.
17. Ibid., sec. 13-2-702.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
“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.

Gamers . . . in the Library?! The Why, What, and How of Videogame Tournaments for All Ages


According to the OCLC Perceptions of Library and Information Resources (2005) report, libraries are tantamount to books in the minds of their users, customers, patrons, and so on. Eli Neiburger’s book may foment a paradigm shift. In Gamers . . . in the Library?! Neiburger shares his passion of gaming technology and his mission to bring it to the masses, and proves that gaming actually supports and enhances the library’s mission of serving as an educational, social, and entertainment center. Contrary to stereotypes, gaming attracts a diverse crowd—young and old alike. Children, parents, and grandparents can be seen singing, dancing, bowling, and golfing with their consoles.

Readers will learn about the different gaming consoles on the market (for example, Nintendo Wii, Nintendo GameCube, Microsoft Xbox, and Sony PlayStation). Also, the author discusses the myriad genres of games and provides advice on how to organize and market (think blogs and word-of-mouth) a gaming tournament. Note: pizza is a requirement!

This book includes diagrams as well as a helpful bibliography. Perhaps the best feature of this work is its comprehensive planning checklist that covers all bases from technical details to furniture and promotion. Required reading for all public libraries—especially for those libraries interested in Web 2.0 and Library 2.0, which includes dialoging with customers and diversifying services in the information landscape of the twenty-first century.

—C. Brian Smith, Reference/eResources Librarian, Arlington Heights (Ill.) Memorial Library

The New Downtown Library: Designing with Communities


Increasing attention to the uncertain fate of libraries in recent years has spawned a literature aimed at an audience beyond the library profession itself. This is probably a salutary development, except to the
extent that many new works purvey stale misrepresentations, such as the notions that libraries are slow technology adopters or that they maintain an undemocratic, paternalistic disdain for the public. This contribution by a professor of media studies and film is justly skeptical of the stereotypical pitfalls and, moreover, presents an instructive study of fifteen major urban public libraries projects during the last two decades, including both new construction (for example, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, and Seattle) and renovations of existing structures (such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York’s Rose Reading Room).

Shannon Mattern is careful to acknowledge that much of what characterizes the “new” large public library has in fact proven perennial, and that public libraries have always struggled to resolve competing demands, not merely settled to fit a static mold of cultural custodian of knowledge. But she also shows how new technologies, innovative visions of civic design, and shifting relations of work, home, and commerce in urban areas prompt designers to adapt and alter their conceptions of the traditional public library spaces and functions. Rather than narrate the story of each project seriatim, Mattern compares multiple locations in terms of pertinent themes: the divergent expectations of library staff, the public, local government, and the architectural team during the design and construction process; the reciprocity of large projects and their downtown contexts; crafting public and private spaces; the symbolic value of libraries; and the practical demands of a large library operation, among others.

Ample black-and-white photographs and other illustrations clarify Mattern’s account, as do excerpts of interviews she conducted with participants in the various projects. Library staff and administration will find this work inherently engaging, but so should library users, architects and designers, and scholars of material culture, new media, and technology trends. —Dean C. Rowan, Reference Librarian, University of California, Berkeley, School of Law

The Intellectual Freedom Manual


The Intellectual Freedom Manual is a must-have for all librarians. The manual provides up-to-date information on policies, guidelines, and interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights. There is also a variety of informative articles on topics like intellectual freedom and the law, an overview of current issues, protecting intellectual freedom, and lobbying.

The purpose of this manual is twofold: to provide librarians with the tools needed to (1) uphold the right to the freedom of information and (2) to deal with issues and challenges relating to intellectual freedom.

While following these policies and guidelines won’t insure that a librarian will never face a challenge, Judith F. Krug, director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) and contributor to the manual writes that “adhering to these principles in every library is absolutely essential if librarians and users are to enjoy the full benefit of freedom of expression under the First Amendment” (preface xii).

The Storytime Sourcebook II: A Compendium of 3500+ New Ideas and Resources for Storytellers


Ever need to plan a storytime at the last minute? This book is a priceless resource for anyone who conducts storytime and needs a quick reference guide for stories, crafts, music, and DVDs.

The Storytime Sourcebook II was created as a reference source for creating fantastic storytime programs using the total of 3,790 items mentioned in the book. This updated edition since 1999 contains music selections, DVDs, and a more recent selection of picture books. This book also contains a topical events calendar to use with tie-in storytime themes such as National Tooth Fairy Day, Read Across America Day, and Parents’ Day.

The book is organized into four parts. Part I contains guides storytellers use every day such as the topical events calendar, recommended reference books and picture books, recommended videos and DVDs, and classic pictures book titles. Part II contains directories storytellers can use daily, such as a directory of publishers and recommended books and a directory of distributors...
Managing Money: A Guide for Librarians


Anne M. Turner, director of the Santa Cruz City-County (Calif.) Library System, provides a life-line for librarians who need a crash course in fiscal management: not just for operating or programming budgets, but for the gritty details of accounting, including a basic knowledge of the terminology. No worries for the reader, because the author uses layman’s terms and a conversational tone throughout the book.

Chapter topics include developing a budget, revenue sources, procurement (buying stuff), bidding major projects, contracting out, building branches, audits, cutting the budget, who are these guys (finance department), concepts and definitions, and afterward (turning the other cheek).

Additional information is listed in several appendices: “Coding a Line-Item Budget,” “Excerpts from the Bid Document for Janitorial Services for the Woody Memorial Library,” “Palos Verdes Library District Gift Policy,” and “Benefactor Recognition in Santa Cruz City-County Library Facilities.” After the appendixes, Turner leaves the reader with detailed chapter notes, a bibliography, and an index.

Overall, Managing Money is a must-have for professionals who are interested in middle-to-upper fiscal management in a public library setting.—Lori Sigety, LaSalle Branch Manager, St. Joseph County Public Library, South Bend, Ind.

Librarian’s Guide to Online Searching


Despite its title, this is not another how-to-search-the-Net book but, rather, a thorough textbook and guide to subject databases for library professionals, whom author Suzanne Bell calls the specialists in the online search field.

Laypeople now do most easy Web searches themselves, yet the value of subject databases is generally unknown to them. The crucial difference for research is that a Web search finds pages picked by a search engine’s indexing program, but “it is not a complete, orderly scan of all the appropriate journals and other published materials in a subject area” (53). What Bell presents here are the skills and principles one needs for looking with a trained eye at any interface for any database and searching it effectively.

The strength of Bell’s book lies in her awareness that, while vendors constantly upgrade their search interfaces, and while each discipline has its own specialized vocabulary and search criteria, the core principles of database structure and search functions remain the same.

Hence, Bell presents two complementary kinds of information. Five central chapters examine in depth, with ample screenshots and examples, the most widely used databases and vendor interfaces in social sciences, science and medicine, bibliographic searching, humanities, and numerical searching, as they appeared in 2005. The book opens with chapters on the logic of database structure and how this informs searching strategies, and it ends with chapters on how to interview, do searches for, and teach lay database users.

Both Bell’s database choices and her discussion of reference interviews and teaching opportunities target the academic library setting. Even so, the information translates well for public library students and professionals, and the book could be especially helpful for those new to the library field or to subject databases in particular.

Furthermore, since Bell expects her specific 2005 database and interface examples to become dated quickly, she uses them illustratively to demonstrate unchanging principles, rather than over-focusing on time-sensitive detail.

Overall, this book is worthwhile either as an introduction or as a refresher course for those who want to do expert database searching and instruction for their patrons.—Michael Austin Shell, Senior Librarian, Remote Customer Services, Jacksonville (Fla.) Public Library
The Readers' Advisory Guide to Nonfiction


Does the thought of being asked to provide nonfiction readers' advisory make you want to hide under the reference desk? If so, you are not alone. This is precisely why author Neal Wyatt penned The Readers' Advisory Guide to Nonfiction.

In chapters 1 and 2, Wyatt focuses on basic concepts of nonfiction readers' advisory and identifies essential components of nonfiction works, such as narrative context, subject, and appeal. The Readers' Advisory Guide to Nonfiction is laden with practical advice, including questions to ask customers when providing nonfiction readers' advisory and a sample exchange between librarian and customer. To become more comfortable with providing nonfiction readers' advisory, Wyatt encourages librarians to read more of this genre, practice and compile “a list of sure-bet nonfiction titles” (44).

Chapters 3 through 10 cover major classifications of nonfiction, including food and cooking, memoirs, true crime, travel, and history and historical biography. For each of these subjects, Wyatt includes a selected bibliography, benchmark books to read and suggest, key authors, resources, and awards. Librarians can utilize this information to create nonfiction subject guides and bibliographies that are specific to their collection.

The remainder of the book includes a discussion about how librarians can become familiar with and market their nonfiction collections. Wyatt encourages librarians to bridge the Dewey divide by cross-promoting nonfiction resources with the fiction collection. The appendixes also contain valuable information. Here, readers will find guidelines for creating annotations, readers' advisory matrixes, and reading notes.

The Readers' Advisory Guide for Nonfiction is a necessity for all public service librarians. It probably won't make you an instant readers' advisory guru; however, it will give you the essentials needed for providing nonfiction reader's advisory. At the very least, this book will lessen your fear about nonfiction readers' advisory and, perhaps, even prevent you from taking cover under the reference desk.—Adrienne Leonardelli, former Reference Librarian, Forsyth County (N.C.) Public Library.

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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.

New Digital Talking Books and Player to be Released This Year

www.loc.gov/nls

Planned for a number of years, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) is beginning to transition their talking books program to a digital format. By the end of 2008, NLS plans to have fifty thousand digital talking-book players available, with larger numbers produced in subsequent years until all NLS users have access to the new format.

Aside from the potential for improved sound quality, a digital format will offer convenience to users, who will no longer need to turn over cassettes or change side-selector switches. Users will be able to jump forward or back by chapter, set bookmarks, and vary playback speed without affecting the pitch of the reader’s voice. In some books, users will be able to jump by paragraph, turn on or off selected parts of the book (such as, footnotes), do keyword searches, or hear selected words spelled.

The new digital talking books player is about six by nine by two inches, in comparison with the cassette book machine, which is nine by eleven by three inches. The weight of the digital talking book player is slightly over two pounds compared to the old machine, which weighs about seven pounds.

New SoundSafe Audiobook Case Developed by Midwest Tape

www.midwesttapes.com

Midwest Tape has recently expanded their services to include more than ten thousand audiobooks.

Based on feedback from public librarians, all audiobooks purchased through Midwest Tape will arrive shelf-ready in their new, patented SoundSafe audiobook case. The SoundSafe case was exclusively developed for the rigors of the public library environment. Its rugged construction is drop-box safe, and its compact size will save valuable shelf space. It can hold up to twenty-two discs.
New Magazine for Tween Girls

www.kikimag.com

Jamie Bryant created Kiki magazine after a long and fruitless search for a magazine for her daughters—something that would fill the gap between Highlights and Teen Vogue, something that would cater to their interest in fashion and design but without the overly-mature content aimed at older teens.

Today’s tween girls are bombarded with highly sexualized and mature images, clothing, and products they may not be ready for. Providing safe, empowering messages—while acknowledging these girls’ increasing maturity and fostering their interest in style and fashion—is the driving force behind Kiki.

Kiki takes the college fashion design curriculum and tailors it to readers nine to fourteen years old. Through the lens of fashion, Kiki encourages girls to explore other disciplines (business, geography, fine art, craft, history, world culture, math) and shows that having fun with style is completely compatible with intelligence and creativity.

HelpNow is the first online tutoring service to offer libraries and their patrons a comprehensive suite of services for virtually any academic need:

1. Conventional homework help—students receive live, one-on-one assistance from tutors.
2. Skills-building exercises—students and tutors use Brainfuse's library of state-aligned online materials in interactive skills-building exercises.
3. Twenty-four-hour writing lab—students submit their work and receive constructive comments from expert writing tutors within twenty-four hours.
4. State-aligned assessment tests—give patrons instant access to state-aligned assessment tests. These tests help patrons identify academic strengths and weaknesses, and help libraries track progress.

Useful for collection development and readers’ advisory, Nonbook Materials Core Collection allows searching (and cross-searching) for materials by a wide range of useful parameters, including media type, reading level, subject, title, publication year, author, publisher, keyword, and more.

Entries include descriptive and critical annotations that offer insight into both quality and content of resources, and cover art (if available) gives librarians a feel for the work. Strict standards are applied to rating materials by age appropriateness. Review excerpts are featured and entries note any awards the work has won. Cataloging records are provided for all items.

The database can link to the library’s OPAC, for an instant check of holdings for any item cited.

OverDrive to Distribute Downloadable Audiobooks Compatible with iPod

www.overdrive.com

OverDrive has announced that it will expand its catalog of downloadable audiobooks to include titles in MP3 format without digital rights management (DRM). This will make OverDrive MP3 Audiobooks compatible with nearly every MP3 player and mobile phone on the market including iPod, Zune, iPhone, and Creative Labs products.

Following the retail launch in May, a limited selection of OverDrive MP3 Audiobooks will be added to OverDrive's extensive library network. OverDrive MP3 Audiobooks for library lending will include thousands of titles from Blackstone Audio, Books in Motion, CSA Word, Audio Evolution, among others.
OverDrive also plans to release OverDrive Media Console for Mac in conjunction with the launch of OverDrive MP3 Audiobooks.

**Census Bureau Produces First Comprehensive Atlas in More Than 80 Years**

The U.S. Census Bureau has released its new Census Atlas of the United States. The atlas illustrates how the nation's population and housing characteristics have changed over the years. With more than seven hundred full-color maps, it is the first general population and housing statistical atlas published by the Census Bureau since 1925.

Featuring more than three hundred pages, the atlas presents data from 1790 through 2000. It is arranged by topic and grouped into three general themes—who we are, where we come from, and what we do. Most maps feature county-level detail for the United States and Puerto Rico.

**Freeway Guides: New Audiobooks for People on the Go**

Frustrated by wasting time on Southern California freeways and realizing that, like them, most people want more out of life, The Freeway Guides were created in 2006 by motivational speaker/trainer Susan Leahy and film director/producer Jared Patrick.

Leahy and Patrick blended their talents and expertise to create affordable and practical training materials designed especially for busy people on the go.

Featuring a team of expert speakers and authors, The Freeway Guides launched with a series of business/work-related titles and are expanding to include new titles focusing on a variety of personal skills and lifestyle subjects. Topics include “Effective Networking,” “Confident Public Speaking,” “Nailing the Job Interview,” and “Planning Your Unique Wedding.”

As The Freeway Guides library continues to grow, there will be titles covering a wide range of topics, always featuring top-notch talent and user-friendly information that is practical, affordable, short, effective, and fun.

**On Demand Video Service Designed for Public Libraries**

MyLibraryDV is a quick and easy to use video-on-demand service created by Recorded Books in partnership with public libraries across the country. MyLibraryDV allows public libraries to offer card holders free movies, network and cable TV programming, and original digital video content downloadable direct to personal computers. MyLibraryDV creates a “virtual video” library branch available 24/7, that also allows libraries to upload original content for patrons’ viewing.

Users will find hundreds of hours of lifestyle programming videos, including *Rick Steves’ Europe, Antiques Roadshow, America’s Test Kitchen, Today’s Homeowner*, independent and foreign films from Film Movement, and an array of classics.

MyLibraryDV offers simultaneous access to all of the programming included on the service, insuring that patrons do not have to wait for a video to be checked back in before it can be downloaded again.

**YourLibrarySite.com Offers Website Development for Public Libraries**

YourLibrarySite.com has been launched by CraftySpace, an Internet technology company focused on website and Web application development services for education and professional organizations.

YourLibrarySite.com programs integrate a refined global site design tailored to the needs of public libraries. Each offers a website solution designed to grow with the changing needs of libraries and the increasing capabilities of Web technology.

The subscription program is designed for small community libraries that often lack technology support or infrastructure. It is a hosted solution with low monthly costs, and includes ongoing support, secure site hosting, and continuous technology upgrades.

For larger libraries and library districts, YourLibrarySite.com offers a customized site program where the website can be hosted on internal servers and maintained by their technology staffs should they desire this. These websites include significant amounts of customized page graphics and features that enhance online community building. The program delivers a website with the latest features that optimize the evolving potential of Web 2.0.
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