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The Public Library Association is a division of the American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; www.pla.org.  
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Labels We Use

In response to the March/April Perspectives column, “Patrons, Customers, Users, Clients: Who Are They and What Difference Does It Make What We Call Them?” I suppose when you are discussing the people who come into the library, you feel a strong need for a term to describe us. Why rouses my curiosity. I struggle with language as label, depersonalizing, dehumanizing label, almost every day. Why people resort to labels does not confuse me: labeling establishes a “they” distinct from an “us.”

“A woman came into the library today asking for...” is patently clear to me. “A teenager asked about...” is also clear. “450 people visited the library today” is also clear. “A patron asked...” is not. My mind forms no picture, only faceless abstraction.

Why can we not be just “people”?: “A man using a wheelchair asked today about clearer signage” is also clear and identifies that person’s need succinctly. (Of course, one could also choose disparaging descriptors as well, but I would hope if one did, others would correct the terminology. That is a large hope; we seem to unlearn disrespect one label at a time.)

We have such a need to divide by label that many of us fail to recognize we have one thing in common—we are all people. Please, continue to discuss what you want to call me, but when I come into the library, I am just a person seeking information of one kind or another.

My folder at the doctor’s says, “Prefers to be called Harold.” And so they do.—Harold A. Maio, Ft. Myers, Florida

Perspectives Contributing Editor Skip Auld Responds

I appreciate Mr. Maio’s comments. What he describes as “dehumanizing labelling” I see as “role clarification.” We who work in libraries are people, yes, but the role we fulfill is that of librarian or other library worker. Those we serve are our patrons, customers, users, or whatever. Each descriptive term carries its own connotations which allow us to better define and describe the relationship between service provider and service recipient. Yes, when I visit my doctor I am above all a person, but I would hope if one did, others would correct the terminology. That is a large hope; we seem to unlearn disrespect one label at a time.

We have such a need to divide by label that many of us fail to recognize we have one thing in common—we are all people. Please, continue to discuss what you want to call me, but when I come into the library, I am just a person seeking information of one kind or another.

My folder at the doctor’s says, “Prefers to be called Harold.” And so they do.—Harold A. Maio, Ft. Myers, Florida

Correction

Ron E. Scrogham’s letter, “More on ‘The Fragile Future’,” which appeared in the March/April 2004 Readers Respond column inadvertently contained an inserted phrase that may have led to some ambiguity. In describing David Davies’ position in his Public Libraries As Culture and Social Centers, the phrase “like a bookstore” appeared. This may give the impression that Davies advocated that libraries become like bookstores, which Scrogham does not believe to be the case. The editors of Public Libraries apologize for this error.
Join the Major Leagues
@yourlibrary® is a hit!

More than 1,300 libraries already have registered!
Has your library stepped up to the plate?

Register for the program at www.al.org/@yourlibrary/jointhemajorleagues and join your colleagues from across the country in the third year of this important 21st century literacy initiative. Developed by the ALA, Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association, the program celebrates and promotes two American classics – baseball and libraries – while heightening awareness about the importance of information literacy.

How can your library get involved once you’ve registered?

DOWNLOAD the Join the Major Leagues “playbooks” chock full of all new trivia questions developed by the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

OFFER to collect entries on behalf of your library contestants.

SHOWCASE the new program poster (available to those libraries that register while supplies last).

CREATE a display of resources to help people of all ages answer the trivia questions.

PROMOTE the program in English and Spanish using materials provided on the program website.

Program runs through September 10, 2004
www.al.org/@yourlibrary/jointhemajorleagues

ALA American Library Association PLA Public Library Association

Join the Major Leagues @ your library® is part of ALA’s Campaign for America’s Libraries. PLA is a program sponsor.
If someone told me twenty-five years ago that I would someday: work for myself; speak to groups large and small about library programs and services; make it my mission to promote the value of technology in libraries; write regularly for library publications; and guest edit a library journal, my response would certainly have been “no way.”

But within the past twenty-five years I have done all of those things. My job as guest editor of Public Libraries gave me the chance to think about unexpected career turns and how these surprises are what bring excitement and energy to the work that I do. This chance to reflect also gave me the opportunity to look at the variety of jobs librarians assume and to consider the connections between openness to professional surprises, librarian roles, and change within public libraries.

In her article on how a college library helped integrate laptops into college classrooms, Krista E. Clumpner writes, “Embracing this program would allow the librarians at our institution an opportunity to showcase their skills outside of their perceived role. . . . We were considered risk-takers, far-sighted, and vision-oriented just for being ‘adopters.’”¹

What Clumpner and her colleagues found is that by taking on the new role described in her article and accepting the associated change and risks, they garnered more support from colleagues, faculty, and students than ever before. The librarians in the project might never have expected to be in the roles they found themselves in, but the new roles ended up being well worth the risk.

“Risk-takers consistently question assumptions in order to identify problems and opportunities. They attach a great deal of importance to the organization’s goals and look for ways to achieve them, without waiting for direction. Part of this work towards goals is learning new skills that they perceive are necessary to resolve the problem. Again, this learning is self-driven, rather than management-driven.”²

That quote is from an article titled “Nothing Ventured Nothing Gained” and describes attributes seen in those librarians who are known for taking career risks or for being open to career change. The risk-takers described above don’t wait for change to come to them; they bring change to their work lives and to the organizations for which they work. This type of initiative can lead to change because when one starts looking into new ways of doing things, or learning new skills, new ideas are undoubtedly uncovered. Often, new ideas also require a look at the big picture rather than focusing on a specific task or job that the librarian is involved in daily.

Rachel Singer Gordon is a public librarian who has done many things in her career. She is an author, a Web site manager, a conference speaker, and a technology specialist. She designed and maintains the LISjobs Web site (www.lisjobs.com), a resource for librarians to use when looking for a job or for employees. Singer Gordon is a prolific author of books and articles. She finds that librarians who write are those who think about the library profession beyond what they encounter in their day-to-day work lives. These are not librarians who are necessarily risk-takers, but they are librarians who tend to look at the professional big picture. Looking at the big picture gives these librarians a chance to consider what trends are on the horizon and what they need to start working on in order to be at the front of the trend. Librarians who are writers might also be more open to change because they give themselves opportunities to be proactive instead of reactive.

In a conversation with Gordon, she described a quality she displays that has a lot to do with the ability to embrace surprise in one’s career. That quality is persistence. Gordon discovered that sometimes an idea she presents is turned down. Sometimes she has had to revise an idea in order to make it a better fit for an organization’s mission or goals. Sometimes she has had to present an idea to several different people or organizations before it is accepted. Gordon’s ability to persist has allowed her to do many different activities in her career.³

No one should expect that if an idea is presented and even tried once and doesn’t fly that that is the end of the idea. If it is a good idea, and the person behind the idea knows it is a good idea, it is worth persisting and initiating a variety of tactics in order to eventually have the chance to implement it. A public library director I once knew sometimes had employees say to him, “We tried that before and it didn’t work.” His response was, “You didn’t try it with me, so let’s try again.” In other words, one try is rarely, if ever, enough.

Take a moment to think about your own career. Is there a list of activities in which you have been involved that you are

continued on page 211

The following is a list of activities in which you have been involved that you are open-ended questions about the value of technology in libraries; make it my mission to promote the value of technology in libraries; write regularly for library publications; and guest edit a library journal, my response would certainly have been “no way.”
Literacy pays. Most parents, educators, and public officials would agree that it’s important for children to become good readers because that generally leads to school and job success.

However, not everyone understands the broad economic benefits of literacy. Studies have calculated a 16 percent real internal rate of return on the financial investment for early childhood development programs, which support the development of language, cognitive skills, and other early learning. Art Rolnick, senior vice president and director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis has studied the economic affect of such programs. Speaking during the early literacy workshop at our PLA National Conference this past February, Rolick said that investing in early childhood development “yields an extraordinary return, far exceeding the return on most investment, private or public.”

Programs that help parents provide a solid foundation for their children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development have proven dividends. Children achieve more in school, act out less, and need fewer services like special education. Both the cost to educate children and the price we pay for poorly educated adults (in terms of welfare, health care, and crime) are lowered when resources are allocated to early childhood development.

The problem, according to Rolick, is that too few organizations invest significantly in this brand of economic development. Without ongoing investment in literacy and early childhood development, its high return is in jeopardy.

In 2001, PLA and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) became partners in the Early Literacy Initiative, an investment in early childhood development and literacy. The first phase of the initiative looked at how public libraries can affect the early literacy experiences parents and caregivers provide to children. The result is Every Child Ready to Read @ your library, an educational program based on research conducted by PLA and ALSC. The research documented something we all know: public libraries can positively affect the early literacy experiences of young children by modeling and teaching learning strategies that parents and caregivers can use.

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The next phase of the Early Literacy Initiative will promote both message and method: early literacy is essential to healthy child development, and parents, caregivers, librarians, and library science students can learn how to support early literacy growth through PLA/ALSC programs, training, materials, and other resources. Check the PLA Web site (www.pla.org) for more details and watch for updates as this next phase proceeds.

As the Early Literacy Initiative and Every Child Ready to Read @ your library are publicized, public libraries will become even more prominently positioned as an important public resource and community asset. If you haven’t already, purchase the Every Child Ready to Read @ your library training kit and begin to offer early literacy workshops for parents and caregivers. Also look for other ways to increase awareness of your library as a center for early literacy. Take on leadership roles and form partnerships with community organizations to make early literacy efforts more visible. Become more involved with your local school district and child-care centers, and establish your library as an integral partner in the development and education of young children.

Public libraries have the opportunity to become a more proactive force in our communities and our nation by accepting an even greater role helping young children develop into literate adults. The potential return is great: stronger public libraries and a more literate nation.

Note: Every Child Ready to Read @ your library kits are available from PLA. Visit www.pla.org for pricing and more information. Trainers are available to provide a half- or full-day workshop to librarians at your library. Contact Barb Macikas, bmacikas@ala.org, for more information.

Clara N. Bohrer, West Bloomfield Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., West Bloomfield, MI 48323-2557; bohrercn@wblib.org.
New Sustainable Branch Opens in Ann Arbor

Opening day of the new Malletts Creek Branch of the Ann Arbor (Mich.) District Library was a smashing success as 1,800 individuals walked through its doors to marvel at the branch innovations and the sustainable design of the facility. The branch is a unique model of sustainable design, featuring solar heating, natural day lighting, a vegetated green roof, convection cooling, naturally captured and filtered storm water, native plants and grasses, and the use of other materials that are renewable resources.

In addition to the sustainable elements of the branch, the facility boasts several new features including a sizable program room, a computer area, a reading room (named after Nellie S. Loving, Ann Arbor’s first librarian), a children’s space with a fish tank, and an exhibits area. The Malletts Creek Branch is a one-story building of approximately 14,000 square feet. The new branch library will serve as a community-based learning center that delivers service to residents of the southeast quadrant of Ann Arbor. While its primary mission is to deliver traditional library services, the branch will also serve as a true community center. This facility includes a vending area with seating for twenty people and a program room for groups of up to 120 people. The branch contains a collection of approximately 35,500 items. Technology includes twenty-eight computer workstations, eighteen of which are located in an electronic training classroom.

The branch is intended to be an example of sustainable design. Both the building itself and the surrounding landscape will capitalize on environmental principles, such as capturing and filtering storm water naturally, thereby allowing the overall project to operate more in harmony with the ecosystem and the community that it serves.

For more information, contact Tim Grimes, Community Relations, at (734) 327-4265.

Queens Library Gets Surprise $1 Million

The Queens (N.Y.) Library received a check for $1 million from an anonymous donor. The gift was in reply to the library’s emergency fund-raising campaign, kicked off by Mayor Bloomberg in May 2003. The gift came unannounced from a financial services firm acting on behalf of a client and was a total surprise to the library.

Said Interim Director Thomas W. Galante, “Our organization was established through the generosity of Andrew Carnegie a century ago. We are a beacon for those who want to improve their lives using our resources for self-learning. We don’t know who our Secret Santa is, but on behalf of the people of Queens, we are profoundly grateful. It will allow us to purchase 100,000 new books that we could not have afforded otherwise. They will include books for children, including home-work help materials, new reference materials for people to find the information they need in their personal lives and their businesses, and new copies of the bestsellers that our customers love so much. With this generous gift, we hope that other library supporters step forward to help us, so we can help those who want to help themselves.”

The check came in an overnight express envelope, without fanfare. Queens Library’s budget has suffered since 2002, with an annual funding reduction of $10 million. The library has reduced library hours and has had to severely trim the purchase of new books and other library materials, programs, and outreach services. The emergency fund-raising campaign has now topped more than $4.4 million of the $9 million three-year goal to shore up library funding.

The Queens Borough Public Library serves a population of 2.2 million in the most ethnically diverse county in the United States. With more than 50,000 people visiting Queens’ libraries every day, borrowing more than 50,000 items every day, the library has the highest circulation of any public library system in the country.

For more information, visit the Queens Library Web site at www.queenslibrary.org or phone (718) 990-0700. For information on opportunities to support the library in its emergency campaign, please contact the Queens Library Foundation at (718) 480-4273.

Travel the World, But Visit the Library First

Providing U.S. Passport Acceptance Service has proven to be a very successful and positive program for both the public and the Mission Viejo Library, located in Mission Viejo, California. Since 1999, the Mission Viejo Library has been an official U.S. Passport Acceptance Service site where citizens can apply for and/or renew their passports. They now can have their passport photos taken at the library as well.

The Friends and Foundation of the Mission Viejo Library purchased a digital camera and printer, designed especially for taking and developing passport photos. Volunteers were trained to take the passport photos, and the library charges ten dollars for the pictures, which are required as part of the passport application process. This convenient service, which is offered evenings and Saturdays, has been very well received by the public. The revenue generated by both the official passport acceptance fee and the photo fee is used by the library to enhance its materials collection. Last year, passport acceptance and passport photo fees generated more than $175,000 for the library.

As an added benefit, passport applicants are invited to obtain library cards, browse the collection, attend programs, use the computers, and visit the Friends and Foundation Bookstore while visiting the library.

For more information about the Mission Viejo Library’s U.S. Passport Acceptance Service and photo service, call Valerie Maginnis...
Tampa Bay Library Consortium Implements One-Stop Searches with WebFeat Prism

The Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC) has implemented WebFeat Prism to provide federated searching of authoritative information databases. With WebFeat Federated search, users at member libraries can now search multiple databases in one easy step through a single intuitive interface.

WebFeat Prism is a critical part of TBLC’s Anywhere-Anytime Library initiative. The goal of the Anywhere-Anytime Library, which also includes online catalog and circulation, e-book resources, and live chat with librarians, is to make the user’s library experience easier, more convenient, and more fruitful. The WebFeat system, dubbed SmartSearch in the Anywhere-Anywhere Library, gives patrons Internet access to information resources that have been traditionally underutilized.

“Before WebFeat, our users would have to search databases individually,” explained Beth Watson, TBLC Assistant Director. “Comprehensive searches took an indeterminate length of time and frustrated many users. Today, with WebFeat federated search, our users can pull results from multiple databases with a single mouse click. Searches are much faster and, because Smart-Search links to databases validated by TBLC librarians, much more authoritative.”

For more information, contact Jennifer Hansen, WebFeat, at www.webfeat.org or jjucas@webfeat.org, or Jerry Rackley, Rackley Communications, at jerry@rackcomm.com or 405-707-0514.

Boston Public Online Store Opens Entertainment Section

The online gallery in the BPL’s popular online store opened featuring images from the Beatles’ concerts at Boston Garden and Suffolk Downs, along with some of Boston’s most famed entertainment venues.

The gallery includes photographs of Beatles fans at the old Boston Garden, images of the old Howard and Melodeon Theaters, and interior shots of the long-closed Keith’s Theater and the Coconut Grove Nightclub. The display features the many places, both past and present, where Bostonians enjoyed theater, music, and other entertainment.

The gallery is just one of the many that online visitors can search in the BPL’s online store at www.bpl.org/store. The galleries include more than 350 reproductions of priceless and rarely seen works of art and photographs available for sale to history lovers, sports fans, and collectors of all interests and budgets.

Boston Public Library’s (BPL) got the Beatles in 1964. A new photograph gallery in the BPL’s popular online store opened featuring images from the Beatles’ concerts at Boston Garden and Suffolk Downs, along with some of Boston’s most famed entertainment venues.

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Literacy Day at Borders Books

As a way to promote literacy, the Fountaindale (Ill.) Public Library District, in cooperation with Borders Books and Music Stores, hosted a Literacy Day at the local Borders bookstore. Fountaindale Library serves the communities of Bolingbrook and Romeoville, Illinois.

The day started with a storytime hosted by Karen Anderson, Library Director. The library mascot, Skooberoo (a kangaroo), was there to greet children and pass out goodie bags. In addition, library staff volunteered to be at the store to assist shoppers in book selections. Shoppers said they appreciated having a personal consultant.

The event was sponsored by the Illinois Literacy Foundation and Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White. During the holiday season, shoppers were asked at the time of purchase to donate $1 to the library. All monies collected were donated to the Illinois Literacy Foundation. Borders Books presented a gift certificate to the Fountaindale Library. It was used toward purchasing library items for the collection.

For more information, contact Amy Lewkowski, Public Information Coordinator, at (630) 759-0408.
Good Boss, Bad Boss
What Makes a Good Supervisor, Manager, Director, or Other Type of Leader?

Skip Auld

The importance of a good boss is hard to overestimate. A good boss helps create a positive atmosphere and recognizes employees for their excellent service, good ideas, and jobs well done. She or he helps ensure good communication and helps team members work through conflict. As change occurs in the library, whether due to new technologies or facilities, budget cuts, new strategic directions, or other factors, a good boss can help staff members be creative and even energized by the changes.

Some people can say, “I have been able to do this and this and this, because my boss is wonderful!” Others say, “My boss holds me back from accomplishing all the great ideas I’d like to implement. He (or she) doesn’t know the first thing about creating a harmonious team that works together on behalf of our patrons. I’d love a boss who wasn’t so clueless about recognizing the efforts that I and my coworkers put forth.”

The essays below reflect a diversity of ideas on what it takes to be a good supervisor, manager, director, or leader in a library. Nancy Almand, Sally Decker Smith, and Claudia Sumler point out some difficulties presented by certain types of library managers. Candace Michalik and Jeannette Barnes give accolades to superlative bosses who mentored and encouraged their own personal and professional growth. The final two essays, by Glen Holt and Melinda Tanner, include their personal insights and lists of positive qualities of good leaders.

A Good Manager Is a Good Person

Nancy Almand
Librarian, Centennial Park Branch Library, Weld Library District, Greeley, Colo.; nalmand@weld.lib.co.us

“It is a little embarrassing that after years of experience, study and research all I can tell you is to be a little kinder to each other.” Aldous Huxley, as quoted by his widow Laura Huxley in 1998. Accessed Mar. 6, 2004, www.whitelotus.org/library2/interviews/huxley.

It often seems that employees spend more time managing the managers than the managers do the employees. Employees often expend all kinds of energy trying to figure out the inscrutable things that managers do. Often the stress an employee experiences is not from the job, but rather from dealing with management, and it is based on uncertainty and a sense of always being judged.

A good manager does not hide behind his or her position, nor use the privilege of the position to behave in a moody or unkind fashion. None of us have the luxury while at work of taking our moods out on others. The bottom line in all our relationships is that only kindness matters. If we can’t accomplish our goals while treating each other with kindness, then we need to re-examine our goals.

A good communication flow is one of the most important conditions found in a successful workplace. Information is power, and everyone likes to know what is going on and to feel in the loop. The goal should be openness and transparency. Frequently, employees find out from each other what is going on in the workplace. Coworkers, however, are not always the most reliable source of information. The best way for a manager to avoid rumor, gossip, and speculation is to give out information. Furthermore, people do a much better job when they are kept informed and when they see how what they are doing fits into the big picture. To control what information people receive is patronizing.

Never underestimate the power of a compliment. Not only does it convey that work was noticed, but it also makes a person feel appreciated. People can go a long distance on a compliment. For many employees, much of their work goes unnoticed and unappreciated. And no, a paycheck is not enough. When you consider all the time staff members put in on the job, you will realize that no one wants to feel it was a waste of time and that no one noticed their contribution or, worse, that they were not even allowed to contribute.

A manager is only as good as the people he or she manages. That means being part of a team. Too often management makes decisions without any input from staff. Managers are not necessarily more equipped to make decisions than anyone else. Since managers are often cut off from the day-to-day affairs of the workplace and the public, they have a strong need for information. By not encouraging input, a manager communicates that those who will ultimately be affected by the decision are not a welcome part of decision making. It does not make sense to ignore the ideas of those with whom you work.

Many employees have had the experience of coming up with a good idea and the manager taking all the credit for that idea. A good manager understands the concept of reflected glory. Managers share in the good work that employees create, but often it doesn’t work the other way around. Too many managers feel threatened by the ideas and enthusiasm of their fellow employees.

While many people have a strong work ethic, a steady diet of no recognition and no appreciation will soon diminish this. Ultimately, employees will move on or stay and just put in their time. A good workplace attracts and keeps good people, even when pay raises are few and far between. What keeps them there? Autonomy. The opportunity to be a part of something. A sense that their ideas are taken seriously. A chance to grow in the job. A connection to those with whom they work.
Why is it that, when interviewing prospective employees, employers often look for initiative, willingness to ask questions, and creativity; yet, once an employee has been hired, conformity, uniformity, and an unquestioning approach are the valued qualities? These are the very qualities that stifle innovation. A good manager finds a way to say yes rather than no and to work with staff to make their ideas a reality. A manager who always has reasons why something can’t happen is an unresponsive manager.

Being a manager involves the art of bringing out the best in people. Doing this requires making connections. Good managers view employees as people first and remember that people work with, and not for, them. A good manager encourages people to try new things, to look at things in new ways, and is open to all kinds of ideas. He or she shares experience and knowledge.

Have you ever had a great manager? Try to remember what it was like and what she or he did that was so wonderful. If you haven’t had ever that experience, don’t give up. The great managers are out there, even if they are few and far between. You may have to become one yourself. Remember that a good manager doesn’t just happen. Many times, it is the employees who must teach their managers just how to manage. A good manager is open to these lessons. A wonderful book that explores these ideas is The Gifted Boss: How to Find, Create, and Keep Great Employees, by Dale Dauten (Morrow, 1999).

Is What You Need What You Get?

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Bosses become bosses because they have a particular set of personal traits, skills, and interests that led them to their positions. People who are bosses by these people have their own particular sets of traits, skills, and interests that led them to their positions. When these personalities don’t match, both boss and employee can become frustrated. The Golden Rule just doesn’t work in these cases, because sometimes when you do unto others as you would have them do to you, you make them crazy.

People can be sorted into two types of validators. Some are internal validators: achieving a goal gives them a feeling of accomplishment and energy to go after the next goal. I’ve heard some of them say that other people suck the energy right out of them, and they would prefer to be left alone to just get on with their work. External validators, on the other hand, actually gain energy from other people, and the more the better. One verbal pat on the back, and they’ll stay up all night to produce the next thing that’s needed.

So, if you combine a boss who thrives on internal validation with a staff member who thrives on external validation, unless at least one of them works really hard, someone is going to be unhappy a lot of the time. The internal validator will see no need to stroke, validate, or in any way applaud the efforts of the other, who will feel ignored and generally unappreciated, when that may not be the case at all. Really, these people aren’t doing it to be mean; they just see the world differently. If the external validator tries to model that Golden Rule, the internal validator feels crowded, uncomfortable, and possibly even condescended to. The situation is just as awkward when reversed.

Internal-validating staff have little choice but to realize that the boss means well when he or she announces their successes to the board, “drags” them in front of a group of any kind to be acknowledged in some way, or pats them on the back figuratively or literally. It’s been my experience, and I confirmed this by talking to many, many colleagues all over, that the library world is not overburdened with external-validating bosses. So what’s an external-validating staff member to do? Several things.

First, recognize that your need for explicit recognition is not a character flaw, it’s just the way you are, as much as your height or ability (or lack of it) to do math in your head is part of you. Second, unless you have real reason to think otherwise, accept that your boss really means no harm and that his or her character isn’t flawed either. Third, recognize that the odds of changing your boss’s behavior are pretty low, although some do make the effort when they know it’s important to a staff member whose contributions they value. And then, go forth and find ways to get the external validation you need.

If you work at a public service desk, getting external validation is almost a no-brainer. Over the course of a day, if you deliver flat-out, knock-your-socks-off service to every patron you encounter, I guarantee that at least one of them will thank you for your efforts.

Some colleagues will respond enthusiastically when you report some accomplishment to them. Communicate with them whenever you have a success to report! If they’re in your building, that makes it easier, but if they’re across the country, there’s always e-mail (and even the telephone). Find a way to put yourself out into the larger library universe; there are lots of cheerleaders out there. Volunteer to present a program or host one or work on a committee. A room full of applause can carry you a long way when you get back to where there isn’t so much.

A colleague who is also a friend can be invaluable. I learned from my younger daughter that, if you have someone to whom you can simply say “Validate me!” before telling your story, you vastly increase the odds that whomever you’re talking to will validate you first and critique the fine points of your position second. Find yourself a “validation buddy” and validate each other whenever either of you needs it.

Designate a file folder for any compliments, thank-you notes, or things of that ilk that come your way. Among many other things I’ve saved are an e-mail from someone who particularly enjoyed an article I wrote and a handwritten note from my boss thanking me for doing a difficult presentation to a hostile community group. On particularly bad days, I close my door and read through everything in the folder. Other days, I just fish out something at random, smile, and get back to work.

No matter what, for the love of mercy, don’t whine. If your situation really is intolerable, find a way out as quickly as you can. If it is tolerable, get on with your life. No one has ever listed being a good whiner as a quality they look for in a colleague or a friend.

If you are a boss, be aware of what your staff members need and deliver it when you can. If any sort of complimenting is simply beyond you right now, try this: just pause, focus on the staff member in front of you, and say “thank you” when the opportunity presents itself. Then get on with whatever you’re doing. It’s not pandering to the needy; it’s simple courtesy, which counts for a lot. And, of course, there’s
always saying “thank you” with chocolate (regular or diabetic variety).

When I’m a Supervisor, I’ll Never Make That Mistake!

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My boss avoided conflict. In fact, he tried to avoid most interactions with staff. The staff who were self-directed kept the department running; those who just wanted a paycheck hid in the stacks. Conflicts between staff members fostered. When I moved on to a new job and became a supervisor, I knew that I didn’t want to be like my former boss, but had no clue what I did want to be like. When a coworker finally replaced my former boss, she also knew that she didn’t want to supervise like he had. Despite her years of experience in her subject specialty, she was at a loss on how to handle the myriad personnel problems that existed in the department due to the years of neglect.

We’ve all heard stories about bad bosses, and many of us have survived them. Bad bosses come in all shapes, sizes, and temperaments. One problem with having a bad boss is the lack of a role model for people who discover one day that they have become a boss themselves. It is easy to look at the behaviors of a bad boss and vow never to treat employees that way. The trick is to realize that the appropriate behavior often is not simply the opposite of what the bad boss does.

You can recognize that constantly attacking staff members is not the way to instill self-confidence or get long-term positive results from the people who work for you. However, giving everyone highly satisfactory evaluations in the hope that even the most misdirected staff will strive to do better is equally misdirected. If you have had a boss whose supervisory style is to avoid conflict, you might believe that the best tactic is to plunge into confronting difficult issues. Such a tactic often takes people by surprise. Working with a boss who is standoffish and never connects with staff might lead you to conclude that the best course is to befriend everyone you supervise. But doing the opposite of the bad boss in your experience may lead you to be a bad boss of another type.

Many people believe that good supervisors have a natural talent for what they do. Some people are more comfortable working with people than others; however, good supervision is a set of behaviors that can be learned. If people have not had the experience of a good role model, there are still many opportunities to learn what is needed to be a good boss. I was lucky. When I became a boss at a county library in Maryland, Nettie Taylor was the Maryland State Librarian and a strong supporter of staff development. I had a variety of opportunities to learn what made a supervisor successful. For many librarians, there are opportunities for continuing education programs that introduce people to basic supervision. In New Jersey, basic supervision programs are offered to support and professional staff through the auspices of the state library and the Highland Regional Library Cooperative. In other locations, there are programs offered through the state library association or local government. The benefit of such programs is that, in addition to learning the basics of supervision, there is also the possibility of developing a network of library colleagues with whom you can share experiences and in the future do peer coaching. Many colleges offer short-term and management programs that include introductions to supervision. Your library may offer tuition reimbursement for job-related training. Even if it does not, one of these courses could be an excellent investment in your success as a supervisor.

Another strategy is to find a mentor or coach. Much has been written about mentoring and coaching programs, but you don’t have to find a formal program to benefit from a mentoring relationship. I was able to find several people experienced in supervision who were willing to give me advice on how to handle personnel situations that were tricky for a novice. Look around you. Who exemplifies good supervisory skills? Your mentor doesn’t have to be someone in your workplace. He or she doesn’t even have to be someone working in a library. The next time you feel at a loss on how to handle a situation with someone you supervise, ask your mentor for advice. If willing, your mentor can give you advice, let you role-play some strategies on how to handle the situation, or just listen while you evaluate the different options available to you.

Often, what we label as a bad boss is a well-meaning person who landed in a supervisory position through the ability to last longer at an organization than others. Sometimes, she or he was excellent doing a frontline job, and the promotion was based on an assumption that the person would automatically be good at supervising others doing the same tasks. These people probably did not have good role models themselves and were not given the opportunity to learn the appropriate behaviors to be good supervisors. You don’t have to let that happen to you.

Good Bosses Change Lives

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I would not be a librarian if it were not for Marilyn Martin, Branch Head of the Downtown Branch Library of the Lynchburg Public Library. Marilyn hired me, a forty-year-old with no library experience, as a part-time library clerk in April 1987. For the first time in my life, I had a job that I enjoyed. But it was more than enjoyment—I knew that the library was where I belonged.

Rather than confine me to the tasks listed on my job description, Marilyn allowed me to branch out, to learn more about the workings of a library, and to take on more responsibilities. When our library computerized its catalog and circulation system, I was fortunate enough to be in a position to learn the new system from the beginning: cataloging, circulation, and serials.

When the opportunity to obtain my MLS arose, Marilyn encouraged me to apply to the University of Tennessee’s distance education program. Once classes started, she allowed me to work my schedule around classes and classwork. At work, we would talk about the classes I was taking, and she would offer welcome suggestions.

With the acquisition of my degree, and with mixed feelings, I left the small branch library where I had worked for
more than twelve years for the larger main library. I am now a reference librarian, but have other pleasant duties as well. Here, too, I have supportive supervisors. My suggestion to begin a book discussion group was enthusiastically received, and I was encouraged to use my computer skills to teach some classes. In 2002, we began a community-wide reading program, Lynchburg Reads, and I have worked and learned as its chairman. I have met many wonderful people, both coworkers and patrons, through my work.

The new experiences are satisfying. When I reflect on the work I am doing now, I am so thankful to have worked with someone who believed in my abilities. Marilyn Martin is no longer my supervisor; she is now my friend.

**Good Grace: An Encomium for the Best of Bosses**

**Jeannette Barnes**
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“*It starts with you.* That’s what I learned from “Grace,” the wonderful supervisor who chivied me into getting an MLIS twenty-five years after I began volunteering and working as a paraprofessional all over the country, in every kind of library. She was absolutely the best manager I’ve ever seen, a lovely human being and a splendid librarian, not simply because of what she knew or even how hard she worked, but because of the way she showed people she cared.

It’s attitude, above all. This remarkable lady loved to foster talent; she spotted what her employees enjoyed doing and set them to it. This is a foxy technique that proved to people who do detailed, repetitive work exactly how their vital contributions fit into the life of the library. Were you clever at working puzzles, did you love mysteries? Good. Grace taught you to track down missing serials. Diplomatic, courteous under fire? Grace would help you understand that an upset patron was probably more hurt, scared, or overwhelmed than deliberately acting difficult. Staff development was a joy for her; she constantly trained her trainers, showing us ways to quicken staff members’ interest in librarianship as a profession, and reveled in her protégés’ success.

*Librarian, check yourself out. Are you the kind of supervisor you’d like to work for? Of course, you can’t hope to run your library without staff members to help. Consider whether you’ve told your staff that lately. People like to know where they stand, whether they’re doing well. Do you truly take time to listen to staff as much as to your patrons? How long has it been since you felt bewildered in a library?*

My boss was brave and honest, too, especially if she discovered she’d made a mistake. Sometimes it’s a shock for “real” librarians to find out how they actually come across to patrons. It’s all too easy to make assumptions about what people want to know. I was assisting Grace at the front desk one afternoon when a sunburned man in clay-splattered overalls and a feedstore cap walked up and asked, “Ma’am, do you have Josephus in Greek?”

Grace actually blushed. We did indeed have *History of the Jewish War* in the original Greek, and the farmer took it with him to read on his tractor. “See?” she whispered to me as he left. “I almost did that patron a true disservice—I was reaching for the folder with the soil maps!”

My mentor never had to say that her most important function was taking time to listen deeply, not just at reference. She paid patient and extraordinary attention, as if there were something she could learn from each of us, every day.

Grace never asked anyone to work harder than she did. No task was too menial for her to want to understand how to do it properly. Who taught her the workflow as it evolved? We, her people, did. She constantly asked us where any problems might arise and how the process could improve, which is how I learned that supervisors stand out front for the people who serve on the front lines. The whole staff was cheerful and cooperative precisely because we all knew she could competently do our jobs in addition to her own. The unwritten motto in that library was, *We Serve Each Other.* And Grace often said, with a grin, “You’ll see—learn all you can from everyone you meet, because you’ve got to know whether it’s been done right—and somewhere, someday, somebody will work for you whose work ethic is quite a lot worse than yours!”

Grace would do anything for us, and we knew it. To genuinely understand the challenges her staff faced, she’d ask us if there wasn’t a way to accomplish a job more efficiently. She’d shift resources to support our recommendations, fighting many a difficult battle with the board. She cross-trained us in everything. She had respect for her people, because she had faith in our abilities. Encouragement was her watchword, and in return, she was revered.

Still, I doubt if the one truly bad boss I’ve had—a startling contrast, an anti-Grace, utterly unGraceful, who picked minutes and gave off the attitude that all the world was out to get her—could have taught me more about what not to do to people, and how not to manage. Picture the difference: the most gifted and excellent manager I’ve ever known was patient, civil, obliging; she got much more done than the dogged, obsessive supervisor who, if asked whether there was a way we could correct or improve some means of doing our work, responded with sniping and backlash.

When I think about Grace, I still smile. That hospitable lady treated everyone as a welcome guest and loved to see our skills blossom. She changed a lot of lives, took a lively pleasure in quickening staff members’ interest in librarianship as a professional career, and reveled in her protégés’ success.

So you see that I’ve had the best of bosses, and I’ve had one who was pretty hard to work for. Perhaps you can guess where staff morale and patron service were outstanding. I wonder if you know where was it easier to bloom, to eagerly love what libraries do? Maybe you, too, remember someone whose legacy lives after her. And how does your garden grow?

**It’s a Skill**

**Glen Holt**
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Good library bosses come in both sexes and all shapes and sizes. Their personalities vary from martinet to friendly “good
old girl or boy” with leadership styles from visionary or directive to team leader or college coach.1

Boss watching and, therefore, strong opinions about the worth of the boss, are an inevitable aspect of modern work life. Some staff will think their boss the best in modern civilization, while others will see the same person as the worst. I once knew a (nonlibrary) institutional director who ranked in any person’s measurement scale as a severe alcoholic who barely functioned as a human being, much less as someone who watched over the fate of an institution. As one employee in this institution told me, “All the other drunks on staff really like her. Then there is a group who keep signing her up for AA and moving stuff around in her office.”

Good bosses are, first of all, effective bosses who get things done. They get things done because they either bring or acquire on the job the skills that make the organization more effective . . .

Good bosses are, first of all, effective bosses who get things done. They get things done because they either bring or acquire on the job the skills that make the organization more effective while helping all staff toward greater self-actualization, even as they complete assigned work tasks. My skill lists for successful bosses change often. Here is my most recent version:

Interpersonal

- Skill to find common ground on which to work successfully with specialists in other subject areas, management areas, and other types of institutions;
- Skill in team building as both a participant and as a team leader; and
- Skill in overcoming the clash in cultures between professional librarians and other operational management professionals like those in marketing, human resources, and facilities management.

Technical

- Skill to manipulate quantitative data into effective reports for management or to be used with external constituencies;
- Skill to manage and leverage budgeted funds and financial gifts;
- Skill in time management, her/his own, yours and others;
- Skill in decision making on the basis of (nearly always) partial data;
- Skill in purposeful business writing; and
- Skill in delivering a coherent short talk or speech.

Management

- Skill in fighting fair;
- Skill in giving bad news, whether performance-based or resources-based; and
- Skill at marketing, both to develop and explain changing rationale for the library generally and for individual library services to customers.

Give me a boss with skills like these, along with a willingness to make hard decisions, a real respect for others, at least one major interest outside the profession, and a sense of place in the natural and sometimes tragic rhythms of human life, and I will find a boss I respect and perhaps even the beginnings of a solid friendship.

Not a Cliché: Leading by Example

Melinda Tanner
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As a district consultant, I work with sixteen library directors, providing them with various types of assistance. Working with directors and managers both in my district and around the state, I have taken note of what works well in the area of library management. Following are skills in direction and management that I have observed to work well:

1. Saying “no” when appropriate;
2. Managing consistently;
3. Not losing composure or patience in front of staff or the public;
4. Controlling tempers and language in front of staff;
5. Consistently knowing what is happening within the library and the community; walking around inside; getting involved outside (reading the newspaper!);
6. Knowing (really knowing) employees and their situations;
7. Recognizing their own limitations and weaknesses;
8. Being honest;
9. Taking responsibility for mistakes and never blaming others;
10. Being dedicated to fulfilling the responsibilities of their job, but not taking it too seriously;
11. Being organized;
12. Planning ahead;
13. Listening to staff and the community;
14. Encouraging new ideas among staff;
15. Being positive, yet realistic;
16. Saying “thank you” consistently; appreciating staff;
17. Recognizing leadership skills in employees; utilizing staff strengths to benefit the library;
18. Keeping staff informed;
19. Having goals;
20. Keeping work relationships professional, yet not sterile;
21. Always thinking of ways to be more productive; not being afraid of change;
22. Actively managing, daily, not just when there are problems;
23. Being willing to learn new things; never acting as if they “know everything”;
24. Encouraging a team environment;
25. Never condescending to employees;
26. Motivating staff to keep learning more; avoiding stagnation; and
27. Being approachable.
This list is by no means exhaustive. I have worked with some terrific library directors and managers. I have also worked with some who are not so terrific. If you are “not so terrific,” do something about it! Take a management course. Find a mentor who can help you improve your skills. Perhaps rethink being a library director or manager. Your employees and coworkers will appreciate it, and your actions will create a more positive working environment for everyone.

Conclusion

Not everyone wants to be a boss, but no one wants to work with a bad boss. When supervisors, managers, directors, and other leaders in a library clearly spell out a vision for and purpose of the library, and when that understanding of purpose is shared by employees and bosses alike; when bosses are kind and strive to recognize the good work of those who work with them; and when leadership skill development is encouraged throughout the library among all staff; then, a healthy work-place develops and focuses on meeting the library and information needs of the community.

Note


References

Bookslut
An Interview with Jessa Crispin

Brendan Dowling

Jessa Crispin is the editor-in-chief of Bookslut (www.bookslut.com), an online magazine devoted to all aspects of books. Since starting Bookslut more than two years ago, Crispin has attracted much attention from the publishing industry. A critical post of Dale Peck’s writing snowballed into an energetic online debate, and Chicago’s NewCity magazine recently named her one of the city’s fifty most influential members of its literati. This interview was conducted June 2004 via e-mail.

Public Libraries: What made you decide to start your Web site?

Jessa Crispin: It was a lack of literary Web sites that made me start Bookslut.com. There were a few, but none of them covered the range of books that I read and wanted to read about. After griping about this for a while, it dawned on me that perhaps I could create the Web site I thought was missing.

PL: What blogs inspired you to create Bookslut?

JC: I’d never really read blogs when I created Bookslut, and I still don’t. My only exposure to blogs were the sites of those people I love but happen to live away from. I read the blogs to keep up with their lives. The fact that they could do it made me think that perhaps I, a code idiot, could do it as well. I kept e-mailing my friends links to literary news, and I thought that just putting the links on a blog would be nicer than constantly inundating them with e-mail.

PL: For Bookslut, what should the purpose and intent of a book review be?

JC: I want the book reviews I run on Bookslut to be interesting to both people who have read the book and those who have not. I want the reviews to be clear on whether the book is good or not for those who haven’t, and to do some digging for those who have read it.

PL: Are you looking for reviewers?

JC: Yes. [Editor’s note: If you are interested in reviewing books for Bookslut, please visit www.bookslut.com/write.htm.]

PL: What are the hallmarks of a good book reviewer, and what are the hallmarks of a bad one?

JC: A bad reviewer refers to him/herself in the first person frequently. When you finish reading a bad review, you have no idea if the book is good or not. A bad reviewer doesn’t even bother to run spell check when submitting a review.

A good reviewer is clear and honest and wants to review a book, not draw attention to him or herself. A good book reviewer does their research on the author’s other books and gives a sense of where the latest book fits in with the oeuvre.

PL: Where would you like to see Bookslut heading in the future? Would you like it to remain a Web site, or would you ever consider turning it into a print journal?

JC: I do have fond thoughts about turning Bookslut into a print magazine, but I’m just waiting for that rich patron of the arts to write me a check. I don’t really foresee that happening, so let’s just assume for now we’ll remain a piddly little Web site. I want to run more and better features. I want long, involved interviews with authors. I would like Bookslut reviews to be used as blurbs on the backs of books. I would like Pantheon to send me review books. Somehow making money off of it would be good. In my dreams I see a Bookslut radio show, and I think I would be a much better Terry Gross. Press coverage would be nice, too. They could send me on Oprah. I promise I’d behave.

PL: What has been the biggest surprise in running Bookslut?

JC: That people take it seriously. I never imagined so many people would read it, that publishers would play along with me, or that authors we approached for interviews would say, “Sure, I’ll talk to you.” This started as my hobby, and now it’s my full-time (non-paying) job.

PL: Do you have any aspirations to write a novel, or to play a larger role in the publishing industry?

JC: I think I’m the only lit blogger not writing a novel. As for being part of the publishing industry, I have this idea in my head of the perfect bookstore. I am, yet again, waiting for a patron of the arts to shell out some cash. I would also like to take over Printer’s Row Book Fair [an annual book fair held in Chicago]. I’m not sure how to go about that, but there may have to be a bloodless coup of some kind.

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What: An exciting new campaign to help promote the value of your library and public libraries nationwide. This PLA/ALA campaign will reach out to national media and decision-makers to deliver the message. We will provide sample press materials, posters, downloadable art, and other promotional materials to help get public attention and reach out to key groups in your community.

Our Goal: To make the library card the most valued and used card in every wallet.

Key Messages: Public libraries are . . .
- partners for vibrant and educated communities
- essential for a free people
- place of opportunity

When: The official campaign launch will be September 2004—National Library Card Sign-Up Month.

Where: Public libraries across the nation.

Who: This campaign is all about you and the services you make possible. Everyone who works in our libraries has a role to play. PLA is focusing first on internal communication. Focus groups of library staff, directors, PR specialists, trustees, and friends were held during the PLA National Conference in Seattle, to get initial feedback and suggestions on themes, messages, and campaign plans. Representatives from every state were invited to a special preconference at ALA in Orlando. We need your help to get all library staff, board members, and Friends involved in the campaign.

Target Audiences:
- Internal: Staff, Trustees, Friends, Volunteers
- External: PLA has made a multiyear commitment to the campaign and will focus on one or two key external audiences each year. For the initial year these audiences are:
  - Influentials: Funders, policymakers, business and community leaders
  - Families
Resources will be provided to help libraries reach other key external audiences:
- Seniors and Baby Boomers
- New Americans
- Teens

Why: Advocacy is a fundamental goal of the PLA Strategic Plan. During this time of increased competition, budget cutbacks, and the evolving role of libraries, it is essential to raise public awareness about what our libraries provide and to fill the information gap about their value. The campaign theme: “The Smartest Card” incorporates the @ your library® brand developed for The Campaign for America's Libraries, a multiyear education campaign sponsored by ALA.

How You Can Get Involved: This campaign in being designed especially for you. The campaign must complement and enhance local marketing efforts. Your comments and suggestions are critical to its success. Please send your questions or comments to: Barb Macikas, PLA Deputy Director, bmacikas@ala.org.

For More Information: To learn more about research for the campaign and receive update, visit www.pla.org. A campaign kit with messages, sample press materials, ideas, and tips are available at www.pla.org/smartestcard.htm. Posters and other materials will also be offered in the August ALA Graphics Catalog. The kit will grow as the campaign grows.
Here Come the Trainers!

Michael Stephens

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, access to the Internet has become as commonplace as access to books in public libraries. Library-based blogs such as RefGrunt (http://refgrunt.blogspot.com) detail what happens in many public libraries across the nation: "Internet sign-in ... Internet sign-in. Internet sign-in . . . "

In the 1990s, an influx of Internet access for staff, followed by public access via public-use PC, created the need for technology training programs for staff and the public. Staff required these programs to offset "technostress," a term explored by librarian John Kupersmith (www.jkup.net/tstress.html) in 1992. The public demanded Internet training: "What was it? How did it work? What's on the Internet? How do I find information?"

This demand has led librarians to assume a new role: Internet trainer! It's part of our job now to show our users how to access and select good information. With the advent of digital libraries, huge databases of Web sites such as Google, and the "Invisible Web" of journal and full-text materials, library users want to find information for themselves and are willing to be trained how to do so. At a recent conference presentation, a presenter queried the crowd: "Who here knew ten years ago you would be a technology/Internet trainer?" The response: Not many hands raised. The presenter then asked, "How many of you are technology trainers now?" The response: Many hands raised!

Have you started a program for staff technology training? Are your users asking for technology-based instruction for the Web? Are you ready to invigorate a process you already have in place? Web resources abound with the public library Internet trainer in mind, geared toward staff training as well as the daunting task of offering engaging classes to the public, available for teens to seniors.

To get started, you may want to visit a subscription newsletter (available in PDF or text format) that offers help for both internal and external training: Loretta's Training Resource Center (http://quicktrainingtips.com), where author Loretta Weiss-Morris offers a clearinghouse of great ideas, such as a recent issue with a lengthy article on needs assessment (http://quicktrainingtips.com/Sample02.pdf). She describes the site as providing “lots of other goodies for computer trainers (IT trainers), public school teachers, librarians, and everyone else who teaches people to use computers.” Useful resources, available at no charge, include humorous training tips and “True Training Tales” that remind us we are all human!

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

Training for Library Staff

Planning a technology-training program for library staff is daunting at the very least. In 1997 the St. Joseph County (Ind.) Public Library (SJCPL) (www.libraryforlife.org) began development of a staff technology-training program when the Networked Resources Development and Training (NRDT) team was created to assist staff with ongoing changes in information technology. The program has morphed through the years from a single librarian to a team of 2.5 trainers and is still evolving. Components of training that NRDT has explored include establishing competencies and assessments and looking to the Web for inspiration and guidance. We don't need to reinvent the wheel.

What should library staff be able to do with technology? What skills are necessary to provide excellent customer service with the tools we use so often now in the library setting? Planning for training should include outlining what technology competencies staff should possess. Take a look at a site from the Rochester (N.Y.) Regional Library Council (RRLC) (www.rrlc.org/competencies/techcomp.html). Checklists make it easy to apply the information to your own public library setting. Here is an excerpt from RRLC’s “Librarianship Competencies You Should Know”:

- Know the Web page address for your institution or your library.
- Understand what resources can be found on your library home page.
- Know the Web page address for your regional library council or library system.
- Know the Web page address for the OPAC (Public Catalog) at your library.
- Know how to search by author, title, and subject in your OPAC.
- Know what resources (online) your library subscribes to and where they are available from outside the library.
- Does everyone staffing your desks know these things? They should!

This well-planned site also has simple interactive pages to test a staff member’s knowledge, such as a self-guided vocabulary quiz (www.rrlc.org/competencies/basicvocab.html). The resources page (www.rrlc.org/competencies/resources.html) offers access to a few other sites that can assist librarians in designing competencies for various tasks.

This leads to an outstanding technology competency document housed at the Oakland (Calif.) Public Library (www.oaklandlibrary.org/techcomp.htm). Not only are more competencies defined, they are defined for specific jobs in their library system. For example, using e-mail is not simply sending and receiving a message, but being able to utilize an address book...
for contact information, sending CC (carbon copy) messages to another person, attaching a document, utilizing a signature file, writing a succinct and informative subject heading, and filing mail in appropriate mailboxes either on the Web or in the mail client software.

After defining competencies, consider assessment. D. Scott Brandt, Technology Librarian and Professor at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, detailed the importance of measurable outcomes in his book *Teaching Technology*:

Assessment is a process of collecting data or information and analyzing it, with the intent to find out something that will help us design instruction. In a generic sense, evaluation is the process of making a decision or critical judgment based on assessment. For our purposes we use the term evaluation to mean a method for making decisions after measuring the effect something has or had. Most people believe that analysis comes at the beginning of our process of developing instruction, and evaluation comes at the end, though it is not always that simple.¹

Useful assessment and development sites include the ARL/OLMS (Association of Research Libraries/Office of Leadership and Management Services) Training Skills Support Site (www.arl.org/training/ilcso/index.html). “Training succeeds if the trainees can demonstrate that they have mastered the material taught,” the Successful Training Page reads (www.arl.org/training/ilcso/success.html). On the same page: “They should be able to apply the skills learned in the workplace, and their performance must improve in a way that benefits the organization.” Well said, and a great foundation for launching a staff program.

Training and education information and materials at the ARL/OLMS site include online courses, management education, and professional development of all kinds, including Professional Writing for Librarians and Library Conflict Management (www.arl.org/training/lyceum_courses.html). Useful information on adult learning, learning objectives, assessment, and success tips can be also found here. Rounding out the site is a reading list of foundational articles from the last twenty years. (These could be supplemented with library literature searches on sources such as EBSCO and other fee-based databases for more current data.)

Then, users may want to check out Webjunction’s training area (www.webjunction.org/do/Navigation/category=38) where there are many resources and guides on how (and how not) to plan your training sessions. Webjunction is piloting great online resources and downloadable documents to help librarians plan training. “Six Components to Consider When Developing a Training Program” (http://webjunction.org:21080/orig/1004029.pdf) complements the ARL materials.

Strong sections include:

- the “Train the Trainer” area, with its list of presenters’ tips created by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (www.gatesfoundation.org) and made available at Webjunction.
- “Presenting Like a Pro” (www.webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=4347) is a worksheet page that a trainer could save, print, and use.

With these resources, from competencies to developmental documents, librarians can get a well-grounded start in their staff programs. What to teach (e-mail, Word, Web search, database use, the magic of RSS [Really Simple Syndication], Excel, PowerPoint, and more) depends on the needs of your particular staff.

**Public Training**

Launching or jumpstarting a public program may also be on your project list. Have you been teaching the same old “Welcome to the Web” class you developed in 1998? Does the class cover Weblogs, newer terms like “phishing” and WiFi? If not, it should!

Find inspiration in two places: First, visit some outstanding public libraries and see what their class offerings look like. You may find a new twist on an old favorite or, who knows, something you’ve never thought of! Second, start surfing the Web!

Click on “Take a Computer Class” at Multnomah County (Ore.) Public Library’s site (www.multcolib.org/events) and check out such offerings as “Technohosts help you search the Web, play educational CD-ROM games, look up materials with the library’s online catalog, use the library’s online databases and guides, and practice basic computer skills.” Notice that they allow online registration and a wait-list status for their classes!

Surf to the King County (Wash.) Public Library System listing of classes (www.kcls.org/compclasses/maycc_Search12.cfm#classes) and marvel at the breadth and depth of offerings, from Internet Level 1 to classes in Spanish. For pure inspiration, don’t miss their Techlab on the Road (www.kcls.org/techlab/techlab.cfm) and NetMasters, the Technology Training Volunteer program (www.kcls.org/olc/netmaster.cfm). Don’t worry if you are not able to offer the same quantity of classes. Design your program to suit the size, staffing, and mission of your individual public library.

Beyond these libraries, search for other public library Web pages at the Public Libraries site (www.publiclibraries.com) to find even more examples of how other libraries design and promote their classes.

Another way to find inspiration for public instruction is to stay immersed in Web culture.

Watch for new trends, terms, and “the next big thing” on sites like Wired (www.wired.com) or the pages at Yahoo! News that offer technology news (http://yahoo.com/news?tmpl=index&cid=738). Don’t miss the RSS feeds for both as well!

The Word Spy (www.wordspy.com) offers a clearinghouse for hot words in pop culture and technology that should find their way into your advanced training. Phishing (www.wordspy.com/words/phishing.asp), for example, is “creating a replica of an existing Web page to fool a user into submitting personal, financial, or password data.” This is practical information to pass on when teaching about scams and pitfalls of Web life. Dress your training up with terms like “flash mob” or “ego surfing.” The entry on Google as a verb (www.wordspy.com/words/google.asp) is fascinating.

Finally, a technology class on digital cameras has been a longtime winner for SJPL. The increasing popularity of digital cameras along with the curiosity of library patrons has constantly filled this popular lecture/demo class. People are curious, looking for buying tips and information before visiting the electronics store. Trainers might want to utilize Amazon’s Digital Camera pages (www.amazon.com) and follow the links under Electronics to highlight how people can read reviews of many different kinds of cameras as well as see pictures. They don’t necessarily have to buy from Amazon, but they can get a good
idea about the camera from the reviews on this site. Another site titled Digital Photography Review (www.dpreview.com) offers more reviews and in-depth images of various cameras.

These sites offer information, directions, inspiration, and a bit of fun along the way for training patrons and staff. Use them to enhance your training endeavors and remember to have fun with teaching technology! ■

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Reference

Resources
ARI/OLMS Training Skills Support Site: www.arl.org/training/ilcso/index.html
ARI/OLMS Successful Training Page: www.arl.org/training/ilcso/success.html
ARI/OLMS Professional Writing for Librarians and Library Conflict Management: www.arl.org/training/lyceum_courses.html
John Kupersmith’s Technostress Page: www.jkup.net/tstress.html
King County Public Library System’s Listing of Classes: www.kcls.org/compclasses/maycc_Search12.cfm#classes
King County Public Library System’s Techlab on the Road: www.kcls.org/techlab/techlab.cfm

BOOKTALK
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PL: What are the most encouraging and disappointing trends of the publishing industry that you’ve observed?

JC: The most disappointing trend might be the decline of book sales. And when books are bought en masse, it’s Left Behind, Harry Potter, and Da Vinci Code. But mainstream books have never been my thing, at least not since I outgrew my Stephen King phase. America still likes to pretend there are no books being written in other languages, unless you’re from the “it country” of the month.

While I hate the “Comics aren’t just for kids!” articles, it has been nice to see comics get the recognition for being works of literature lately. You can even find Maus and Sandman in libraries these days.

PL: As you gain popularity, you’re surely going to be courted by publishers—how do you intend to maintain objectivity?

JC: I keep trying to get publishers to sway me. Attention all publishers: I accept bribes. Cash is best. My computer is falling apart, so a laptop of your choosing will also be accepted. I’m just waiting to sell out, people! ■

Brendan Dowling interviewed Jessa Crispin via e-mail in June 2004. If you have any suggestions of authors you would like to see featured in Book Talk, or if you are interested in volunteering to be an author-interviewer, contact the contributing editors: Kathleen Hughes is Managing Editor of Public Libraries, and Brendan Dowling is the Editorial Assistant. Both can be reached at the Public Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; khughes@ala.org, bdowling@ala.org.
Library Web Sites Deconstructed

Paula Wilson

Library Web sites continue to astound and delight their customers through slick interfaces, easy search screens, and more customer-centered features than ever before. They may take months to plan through committee or teams, yet the outcome of these efforts appears just as fast as the webmaster is able to upload the files. This makes the webmaster’s work seem like magic.

As we all know, these sites don’t just miraculously appear on the Web. The ease with which the changes are made is usually not indicative of the work that goes on behind the scenes.

Unfortunately, much of the preparatory work including planning, content creation, programming, and design is not outwardly visible. Many times source code is available for viewing through Internet browsers or through files that can be saved for offline viewing, if that feature has not been disabled, but server-side coding is hidden. Even so, viewing the HTML gives exactly that—the code used to produce the page. It does not show how the teen committee met for several months to develop content for their teen pages, nor the webmaster’s design of the database to house all of that content, or the query statements used to pull that data back out and display it on the Web site.

As customers continue to discover the vast and varied collections and services available through library Web sites, their questions about these resources will undoubtedly increase. Not only will customers’ questions increase in frequency, but these questions will require a higher level of technical knowledge by staff.

Many factors contribute to the ability of staff to assist customers in troubleshooting the barriers they encounter when accessing Web-based services. For example, pop-up blocking software or privacy settings in a patron’s Internet browser may impede their access to certain features of the library Web site or from licensed databases. When they contact the library for help, the public service staff must need the assistance of the technical department to diagnose the problem, especially if the staff computers are locked down with limited permissions.

Additional factors that impede public service staff from understanding problems customers may encounter include the fact that some staff members may work exclusively in the staff client of the ILS during their shift. Even when they check their personal accounts and place requests for themselves, they may do so in the staff module. Furthermore, if they have fine-exempt status, they may not experience some of the barriers to access that some customers face.

As more and more of our business is conducted online, it is critical that staff understand the technology that makes the Web work, or not work, so they may better serve their customers. Library Web sites employ a varying amount of technology and use various software packages to create and maintain them. The libraries listed below have shared some of their projects and the technology they have used to create them. There are many more aspects of these Web sites to explore; however, certain areas of them are highlighted below.

**Boston Public Library**
(www.bpl.org/store/index.asp)

*Image Database and Online Store*

The Boston Public Library created an image database to promote awareness of a very unique and underutilized collection of thousands of images. The image gallery uses ASP (Active Server Pages) and mSQL (Mini Structured Query Language) store and retrieve the images. Additionally, the library offers a subset of this collection to customers so that they may order merchandise branded with these images. Customers can order prints, t-shirts, book bags, journals, and even lunch boxes with historic images from the Boston Red Sox, Boston Marathon, and specific events like the Molasses Disaster of 1919. The library uses the services of two vendors that provide turnkey solutions for taking orders, credit card transactions, product fulfillment, and shipping: Café Press.com (www.cafepress.com) and Zazzle (www.zazzle.com).

**Las Vegas-Clark County Library District**
(www.lvccld.org)

*Database-Driven Web Pages*

Inundated with requests to update the Web site, this library was able to save staff time and decrease the number of requests to the Web designer by creating a system that allows staff to manage their own data. It identified the most time-consuming requests and found a way to automate them using ColdFusion (Macromedia) and Access (Microsoft) databases. These tasks included updating the events database, posting job ads, listing literacy classes, and delivering content for their summer reading program during its nine-week time span. It also created a paperless registration system for computer classes.

**Examples:**
- Just for Kids: www.lvccld.org/kids/index.cfm
- Employment: www.lvccld.org/employment/index.cfm
- Literacy: www.lvccld.org/about/card_services/call.cfm
- Computer class registration: www.lvccld.org/seniors/computer_classes.cfm
Maricopa County Library District
(http://libcat.maricopa.gov/mysteryclub)

Mystery Club of Luna Drive
This online serialized novel is developed using Dreamweaver, Flash, and ColdFusion (Macromedia Web design products for coding, animation and interactivity, and database management) to deliver its contents to children. This story, authored by James M. Deem, centers around three characters—Luz Lucero, Max Waters, and Dwight Underwood. Each chapter ends with a cliffhanger and is released the first of every month. The entire book will be published online by September 2004. Staff manages input from visitors through interactive features like a Mystery Box, and each chapter includes chapter guides that offer questions and teacher-directed activities. This Web site demonstrates an innovative way to deliver a program to children using just the right amount of technology so as not to detract from its main purpose—reading.

Phoenix Public Library
(www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org)

Portal Development and the Use of Third-Party Content Providers
A study of this homegrown portal Web site reveals very deep collections including subscription databases, Web sites, and photographs. Additionally, customers are offered personalization features that allow them to save favorite databases, books, and searches. What many libraries can implement regardless of their size or budget is the inclusion of dynamic content from free or inexpensive content providers. These services require little or no programming and once set up require only a small amount of maintenance.

* NewsIsFree (www.newisfree.com), a nonprofit Web site, offers thousands of news sources to place on your site. News from this service appears on the library’s home page (see Headline News) and its business page (www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org/business.jsp; see ‘Current Business News’).

* Bookwatch (www.onfocus.com) lists the most frequently mentioned books appearing on weblogs by searching for occurrences of links to books at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, or Powells. This list of books is displayed with links into the catalog at www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org/bookwatch.jsp.

These examples illustrate the varied type of software or technology used to create content and services on library Web sites. As an increasing amount of business is conducted online, the ability for public service staff to assist their customers will, too. At Columbus Metropolitan Library (Ohio) a team of public service staff spend a portion of their time on the desk and the other part developing the library’s Web site. These staff members, called virtual librarians, are learning about Web development through conducting surveys, reading, training, and conferences. According to Jessica Crim-Weithman, Manager of Web and Applications Development, they have started learning to develop Web pages in ColdFusion, and most recently have been recruiting content providers for their third-generation Web site. Technology allows us to move forward at lightning speed with new and innovative ways to serve our customers through the Web. We often talk about Web development, but it is just as critical to develop our staff, too.

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Preserving Videotapes in Libraries

Tony Greiner

With digital cameras now popular and DVDs rapidly replacing VHS tape for home use, it is time for libraries to start thinking about the videotapes in their collections. Not the commercially produced copies of feature films, but the images they have that are unique and should be preserved. A public library may have copies of television shows or news broadcasts shot in the town. A university library may have a copy of a lecture given by a visiting Nobel laureate. A local historical society may have interviews of prominent or notable citizens. Digital recordings of any length are still commonly recorded onto tapes.4 You need to have all of these elements to have a Jell-O salad or a magnetic tape; and just as the most unstable element of the salad is the gelatin, the most unstable part of magnetic tape is the binder.

How Does Magnetic Tape Work?

John Van Bogart developed a wonderful analogy for understanding how magnetic tape is assembled. Think of a Jell-O salad. The bits of fruit suspended in the Jell-O are the magnetic particles on which the actual signal is recorded. As the fruit is suspended in the gelatin, the magnetic bits are suspended in a polyurethane binder. Just as a Jell-O salad rests on a plate, the binder is attached to a substrate, or backing, usually made of plastic.4 You need to have all of these elements to have a Jell-O salad or a magnetic tape; and just as the most unstable element of the salad is the gelatin, the most unstable part of magnetic tape is the binder.

What Can Go Wrong?

To be available for viewing, videotape needs to be stable and reasonably intact, and there must be a working playback machine for that type of tape. Although the binder is the component most likely to fail, problems can also occur in playback because of damage to the backing material. As a rule, the magnetic materials themselves are stable, barring the presence of a strong magnetic field.

Binders are hygroscopic; they react to the presence or absence of water.5 The long polyester chains in the binder can be broken by the presence of too much water, including high humidity. If a tape that has experienced binder breakdown is played, a situation known as “sticky shed” will occur; bits of the binder (and the magnetic material in it) will be left on the playback head.6

Before the Voyager spacecraft was launched in the journey that took it out of the solar system, NASA analyzed the tapes used aboard the craft, testing for the effects of heat, humidity, and oxygen. These tests found that the presence or lack of oxygen is not a factor, and even fairly high temperatures (165°F) by themselves will not cause binder failure. However, moisture is a problem, and moisture combined with heat can be a tape killer. Degradation from high humidity or heat combined with humidity can occur very quickly. A tape stored three months at 100 percent relative humidity (RH) and 95°F (common summer conditions in much of the United States) will experience significant sticky shed.7 Luckily, bringing a tape back to a lower humidity can help some of the binder to re-attach itself to the backing, if it hasn’t been played and rubbed off. In emergencies, the tape can even be “baked” in an oven; but this work should be done by an expert.

However, even if stored properly, magnetic tape has a lifespan of about twenty-five to sixty-five years.8 Water isn’t the only threat. Not all researchers agree that high temperatures are not a problem. Some think that temperatures above 74°F don’t hurt the binder, but can increase the tightness of the tape backing, which can cause drop-offs (pieces of the binder falling off the tape, which appear as white flashes when played back).9 Temperatures below 46°F may cause lubricants to come out of the binder and the tape rolls to slacken, which leads to tracking problems at playback and increased chances of a mechanical snag.10 To add to the fun, humidity below 25 percent can lead to static electricity, attracting damaging dust to the tape’s surface.11

Even a perfectly preserved tape is useless without a compatible working playback machine. Remember those thirty videotape formats? Most are no longer made, and new parts are unavailable. It is estimated that, once parts become unavailable, the mean time before failure (MTBF) of a videotape player is only 2,000 hours.12 With a larger collection it may take that long to dub to a new format.

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Solutions—Also Known As “Can These Videotapes Be Saved?”

The threat to our recorded heritage is real, serious, and immediate. However, there are things that all libraries can do to slow decay and help preserve these images. Bigger libraries will want to take additional steps of climate control, but any institution can make the commitment to preserve its collection by following these guidelines.

First, determine what is to be saved. Debbie Hess Norris, photographic conservator for the Winterthur Museum in Delaware, has laid out the following items to consider when choosing tapes for preservation:

- How does the subject of the video relate to the institution’s mission?
- How does the video relate to holdings, in any format, at other institutions and its own?
- Will this video be important to future scholarship?
- If artistic, is the work of a well-known or important artist?
- Has the video been requested in recent years? (Assuming it has been cataloged!)
- Does the video relate to current scholarship?
- Is it a rare example of something?

First Steps of Preservation

After determining what should be preserved, some simple steps should be taken immediately. The more of these you do, the longer your recording is likely to last.

1. If the tape is in a cassette, like VHS, break off the safety tab on the back to prevent accidental recording over the original.
2. If it is an open-reel tape, disable the “record” feature on the tape player (usually this can be done with a switch).
3. For each tape, make a record of the recording equipment and levels used in its creation; the date, time, and place the recording was made; and the contents of the recording. Home-use VCR machines do not have adjustable levels.
4. Do not fast-forward tapes, which can cause uneven tension on the tape and uneven winding on the hub. Play tapes forward at normal speed only.
5. When storing tapes, wind them at normal speed onto the take-up hub, and store them vertically. If using open-reel tape, avoid take-up hubs that have openings, or slots, which can cause bulging. Secure the end with a piece of tape made especially for that purpose. Avoid touching a tape with your fingers.
6. All tapes should be boxed in nonacidic, static-free boxes that are stored vertically and away from magnets.
7. Demagnetize the playing heads at least once every twenty playing hours. Before demagnetizing playback equipment, remove the playback equipment from the room with the tapes. Keep the tapes away from magnetic fields, such as microphones, computers, fax machines, and photocopiers.
8. Dust can do serious damage to tapes. Keep the area and recorders clean, vacuuming, if possible, with a HEPA filter bag in the cleaner. Use a slightly damp, chemical-free wipe to remove dirt and dust from the outside of the containers and from the shelving.
9. If transporting a tape, keep it in a stable environment. Putting the box in a styrofoam cooler for the move is a simple and safe method. Don’t put it in the trunk!
10. Create an archival duplicate, and keep it in a separate location.
11. The increased power of airport security devices after September 11 means it is no longer safe to pass tapes through security machines. If traveling, make arrangements for the tape to be examined manually. One alternative is to ship tapes via Federal Express, which does not x-ray packages.
12. Never remove a tape from the machine before it has played to the end. Removing a tape in the middle greatly increases the likelihood that the tape will be caught in the machine and that important information will be destroyed. (We have all seen VCRs “eat” a tape!)
13. Dubbing and Duplication

The simple steps listed above will extend the life of magnetic tapes and are a good start. But, because magnetic tape is an unstable medium, a program of dubbing the tape onto new tapes (and, when needed, onto new tape systems) should be undertaken if possible. This “conservation of the image” is a little different than other types of conservation in that it is the information that must be preserved rather than the medium (although no one should throw out originals after a copy is made, as there are still too many variables, too much that is not known!).

For each tape in the collection, a documentation form should be made and kept up to date. On this form, record the date of each playing and a notation of pops, hisses, blurred images, etc. These notes can be checked against subsequent playings to determine if the tape is degrading. The best archival practice is to keep the form separate from the tape, but in practice keeping it with the tape will help ensure that the form is maintained.

Examine the playback head of the player after each use. Over time, materials from the binder will migrate out onto the tape surface and then rub off onto the playback head. If the head is kept clean and examined after each use, it can help reveal which tapes need duplication. Likewise, tapes showing a white film should be dubbed. Sometimes deterioration can be noticed only by playing the tape. (Be sure to encourage viewers to report problems.) A visual inspection of open reel tapes, without playing them, can also be useful. If the tape pack (the way the tape loads on the reel) can be viewed, check to see if it is consistent and bulge-free. Rewind poorly packed tapes and then play them back onto the take-up reel at normal speed.

Not all institutions will be financially able to dub all tapes every ten to twenty years. If necessary, duplication can be postponed until tape decay becomes apparent. (Hence, the importance of a record for each tape.) However, waiting until decay is apparent means that even the copies will be of a degraded image.

The Dubbing Process

For the most important images, video can be copied to film, but it is very expensive with prices being as high as $5,000 an hour. If your institution has a tape of this value, and you are unable to preserve it to the highest standards, the tape should be transferred to a
library that can (and will) maintain the recording for the future.

In most cases, duplicating the tape onto another tape is the most practical procedure. Certain guidelines in dubbing should be followed.

1. Buy quality tapes, and buy them “fresh.” Binder breakdown can occur in older, unrecorded tapes. Record at regular speed.
2. If transferring to a different format, look for one that is currently supported by availability of tape players as well as the tapes themselves.
3. If you are copying an analog tape to another analog tape, make the recording in “real time.” Fast dubbing leads to loss of signal. (Digital tapes can be dubbed at high speed.)
4. Make note of the equipment and settings used in the dubbing, and keep that information with the tape.

Duplication should be done every ten to twenty years and should be done immediately if the tape is showing signs of decay, or if the format is passing out of active life (duplicating in this case to a supported format). If possible, two copies should be made, one for storage elsewhere and a “playing” copy for use. Keep the information on the settings, tape, and equipment used.

A Word about Digital

Digital recordings work in a fundamentally different manner than traditional (analog) recordings. In an analog recording, the machine records the signal onto the tape in a consistent, seamless line, with intensity, color, tone, and form all being part of the signal. Analog recording has the problem, however, that duplication leads to a loss of signal (the data that is used to recreate the image. Digital Betacam at 2:1 is currently the best, 6:1 is common, and some compression rates run as high as 200:1).

Digital recordings made on a tape are subject to the same problems as analog recordings. Due to the nature of the algorithms that “fill in” the holes of a digitalized recording, playback of even a damaged digital recording will be of a consistent quality, until the medium has experienced enough damage that the algorithm fails. Then the failure is catastrophic, and the image has been lost.

For that reason, it is important to duplicate digitalized tapes on a set schedule, because it is too late once loss has been noticed. On the positive side, digital copying, if done correctly, is an exact copy; there is no loss of signal with duplication as there is with analog recordings.

Although early CD-R (compact disc recordable) had stability problems, that problem has been corrected, and tests suggest that properly recorded and stored CDs will last eighty to one hundred years. Unfortunately, CD-R does not have enough memory to hold uncompressed video of any size; and compressed video has signal loss. Most other storage methods are either too expensive or too small to be of use for preserving video images. (DVDs can, of course, store images economically, but it is too early to determine their archival lifespan.)

The guidelines for using equipment that is still supported remain; don’t...
assume that tapes or CDs made with today’s equipment will be playable in the machines made twenty years from now. Until the stability of CD-R and DVDs is positively determined, there is no “right answer” on the digital question; each institution will have to make its own decisions. Copying in both formats is an option.

Humidity and Temperature

Even if tapes are stored and handled properly, humidity and temperature will be a problem. The equipment needed to maintain and monitor proper levels is beyond the resources of most smaller institutions. If more scientific equipment is not available, it might be a simple matter to run a dehumidifier in extremely arid places and a humidifier in extremely wet.

Conclusion

As a book decays over time, it can be reset and reissued. One doesn’t need to own a first folio of Shakespeare in order to read and enjoy his work. But what would be the value of a recording of Shakespeare reading his sonnets? We don’t have that; but in 100 years people will be able to see a performance of Death of a Salesman directed by Arthur Miller—if the tape is preserved. They will be able to hear a lecture by Gloria Steinem—if the tape is preserved. They will be able to witness the horrors of September 11—if the tape is preserved. And they will be able to view news coverage, documentaries, and interviews with prominent people in your community—if your library takes the steps to preserve those recordings.

References

17. E-mail from Robert Grotke, Apr. 17, 2003; e-mail from Susan Stauderman, July 20, 2003.

The author would like to thank Susan Stauderman of the Smithsonian Institution for reading an early draft of this paper and making many helpful suggestions. Robert Grotke of Cornell University provided not only scholarship, but information on airport security. Thanks also to Randy Silverman of the University of Utah for his encouragement and enthusiasm.
Getting Your Money’s Worth
How to Hire the Right Consultants

Paula M. Singer and Sandra Nelson

The process of selecting a consultant can be challenging even for experienced library managers. This article provides guidelines for writing effective RFPs, distributing those RFPs to the appropriate consultants, evaluating the proposals that are received, and working with the consultants who are selected.

The environment in which library managers operate is becoming more complex every day. As a result, more managers from libraries of all sizes are making use of outside consultants to help with strategic planning, automation projects, Internet and Web applications, program and service development, and productivity assessments, to name a few. Ten years ago there were relatively few library consultants. Today there are dozens of individuals and firms providing a wide variety of consultant services for public libraries.

The process of hiring a consultant can be challenging, even for managers who have hired consultants in the past. Many libraries are required to go through a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) process to solicit proposals from consultants for every project, or for projects that will cost more than a specified amount of money. Other libraries can develop their own methods for selecting a consultant. The basic steps for either process are the same. The primary difference is that the RFP process normally requires staff to use a predetermined outline and to request specific information from the consultant. This article uses the term RFP as a general term referring to all processes used to solicit proposals or bids from consultants.

The key to writing an effective RFP is to start by defining “effective.” Too often an RFP is considered effective if it contains all the elements required to be approved by the library’s governing authority—and in some libraries that can be a significant achievement. However, that is not the way to measure the effectiveness of an RFP. You are issuing an RFP to find the most qualified consultant for your project. The way to measure the effectiveness of your RFP is to see if it contains the information needed to encourage qualified consultants to respond. It can be helpful to think of your RFP as a combination of job posting and advertisement for your library. You are posting a position for a consultant and you want to get proposals from the most qualified applicants. Well-written RFPs attract qualified and experienced consultants. Poorly written RFPs are often ignored by those consultants. The RFP process has three steps: write the RFP, distribute the RFP, and evaluate the proposals you receive.

Write the RFP

Four key elements need to be included in an effective RFP: project description and scope, consultant roles and job description, project timeline, and project budget.

Project Description and Scope

The RFP should contain a clear description of the project, including the scope of work, the deliverables (what you expect the consultant to produce), and the major milestones. Having a clear scope of work that is understood by the library staff and the consultant is critical. Projects and relationships have been known to crumble when “scope creep” occurs (by either the consultant or client), especially if neither funds nor time have been allocated for additional tasks. Reporting relationships need to be defined, and everyone needs to agree on who the client is. The client may or may not be the individual to whom the consultant reports. The line of authority and reporting relationships need to be clear and understood by everyone involved in the project.

It is a good idea to include library decision makers and representatives from key constituencies in the process of developing the project description and scope. This helps to ensure that there is general consensus about the expected outcomes, processes, and responsibilities. This is the time to think not only about the what, but the how and who of the project as well. How should the project be conducted? Who should be involved: the board, the staff, the community? Do you want to create an internal review or
Consultant Roles and Job Description

Consultants can play many different roles, depending on the scope of project and the needs of the hiring library. You will have to identify the primary role or roles you expect the consultant to play before you develop a consultant job description and write the RFP. Common consultant roles include:

- Facilitator: Objective-neutral to manage meetings, offer input, resolve a grievance, or to help settle conflicts.
- Researcher: Information gatherer when there is no internal expertise or if a project is too time-consuming.
- Extra pair of hands: Help when you are short-staffed.
- Expert: Specialist to provide information and expertise.
- Political cover: Outsider to deliver politically sensitive information or recommendations.
- Coach: Teacher who provides one-to-one guidance and support for one or more managers.
- Trainer: Teacher who helps groups of staff develop skills or change behaviors.
- Evaluator: Assessor to provide feedback and recommendations to library managers about a program or service.

While the consultant can take on many roles, the consultant is not the manager—that is the job of the client. The consulting relationship is that of a partnership. The consultant can provide coaching, walk the client through options, envision and practice alternative scenarios, role play, and help the client sort through values and options, but in the end the client remains the manager. The manager is the person who makes personnel and value-based decisions, implements recommendations, and deals with the consequences of actions.

When you have identified the role or roles the consultant will play in your project, you are ready to decide what skills you want the consultant to have. Be realistic; no consultant will be able to be or do everything, although most have a number of skills and areas of expertise. The skills you seek in a consultant should be a function of the scope of the project and actions that are required to successfully complete the project. It is probable that you will require the consultant to have more than one major skill. For example, you may want a consultant with subject matter expertise, the ability to assess needs, and the ability to analyze data. You should expect the consultant, regardless of the project, to possess skills in three areas: the subject matter that is the focus of the project (e.g., strategic planning, performance management, library technology, etc.); interpersonal skills; and consulting skills (contracting, feedback, etc.).

After you have determined the consultant’s roles in your project and identified the skills the consultant will need, you are ready to develop a consultant job description. The job description, much like the job description of any employee, should include the following:

- project summary
- roles of the consultant
- responsibilities of the consultant
- required knowledge, skills, experiences, and competencies to complete the project.

This job description should be included in your RFP and serve as the basis for evaluating the proposals you receive.

Time Line

The third key element in an effective RFP is the time line. When you define the time line for the project, make sure you allow enough time for consultants to respond. Good consultants are busy people working with multiple clients and multiple deadlines. It is unreasonable to expect them to drop everything to prepare a proposal immediately upon receipt of an RFP. When setting the deadline for receipt of proposals remember that it can take up to two weeks for an RFP to reach a consultant after you issue it. Therefore, the minimum turn-around time for proposals should be one month, and six weeks is preferable.

The consultants are not the only people operating under time constraints. Library staff are also fully occupied. It is important to leave sufficient time to evaluate the responses to your RFP before the project start date and to build enough into the project timeline to complete all project activities. If a project has budget implications and needs to be finalized by April and you think it will take about six months to complete the project activities, then estimate a nine-month project (it almost always takes longer than you think) and make sure that you will be able to award the project by August of the prior year. Generally, that implies issuing the RFP in May, requesting responses thirty to forty-five days later and issuing an award or notice to proceed to the consultant selected in July. If your board does not meet in July, you would need to change these dates to accommodate the board schedule.

Budget

The fourth key element in your proposal is the budget for the project. It is important to let potential consultants know how much money you have available for your project. If you cannot include specific dollar amounts because of restrictions by the library’s governing authority, at least provide consultants with some sense of the scope of your budget parameters. You might include a range of dollars available or a “not to exceed” amount. If the consultants understand your financial restrictions, they can develop and design a methodology that fits within your budget and meets your needs. If your budget is lower than might be expected, the consultant might suggest tasks that could be eliminated, performed by qualified members of the library, delayed, or even moved to the following budget year. If your RFP includes no budget parameters, you are
Consultants Online

graphic area, and specialty: ants that can be searched by name, geo-

first is a general list of library consult-

to. There are a number of ways to iden-

Distribute the RFP

Once you have completed your RFP, you will need to find consultants to send it to. There are a number of ways to iden-
tify potential consultants for your proj-

Evaluate the Proposals

Finally, you have to decide how you will evaluate the proposals you receive and what criteria you will use as the basis for your evaluation. Many libraries use a committee to evaluate proposals to bring different points of view and different areas of expertise to the evaluation process. The committee normally reviews all of the proposals, selects the top two or three proposals, checks refer-

General Guidelines for Using Consultants

Remember you are the client.

Define the consultant/client relationship.

Make sure that responsibilities and timelines are clearly defined.

Identify the client liaison and the lines of authority.

Assign staff to work with the consultant to learn new skills.

Make sure the consultant has all of the relevant information. Remember, no surprises!

Give the consultant feedback about his/her performance throughout the project.

Hire consultants you can trust—and then trust them!

match your budget and needs. Finally, it should go without saying that the con-

Planning Is the Key to a Successful Project

As you can see, careful planning is the key to selecting and using a consultant. The planning starts by working with representatives from all stakeholders to write a clear and complete RFP. It con-

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Bridging the “Digital Divide” in Colorado Libraries

Survey Results from the Colorado Public Libraries and the “Digital Divide” 2002 Study

Tammi Moe

In the spring of 2002, Colorado public libraries participated in a Library Services and Technology Act–funded study to assess the impact of public libraries on bridging the “Digital Divide.” This article presents significant findings from that study.

Many publicly funded libraries across the United States actively seek ways to promote literacy and free access to information. This is sometimes challenging. At the forefront of the challenges are funding, censorship, and technology equality. Technology has changed the face of communication and information delivery in many ways, including the way our children learn; how we stay in touch with each other; the way we do business; and how we define our communities.

The “Digital Divide” is the mainstream buzzword for technology inequality. Since the late 1990s, research has determined that the Digital Divide is an international phenomenon with far-reaching effects and broad definitions. Studies that have been used to articulate what the Digital Divide is provide foundations for further studies on how to bridge that divide. Analyzing the role of librarians and libraries in bridging the divide provides policy makers with information to make effective decisions related to technology in public libraries. By understanding technology use in public libraries, librarians can design a road map for serving customers and better understand the impact library services have on customers and the community.

Methods

In March 2002, the Library Research Service, a unit of the Colorado State Library and the Colorado Department of Education, conducted a sample survey of nearly 2,000 Colorado public library patrons. The survey design included outcome-based questions in order to understand the impact of computers and Internet access provided by public libraries. Questions addressed patrons’:

- Internet experience;
- Frequency of library computer use;
- Options available to access the Internet;
- Skills learned or improved through library-based access;
- Different ways in which skills were learned;
- Internet activities; and
- The overall effectiveness of these resources.

Each public library received survey forms based on the population of its legal service area. Libraries serving 10,000 or more people were sent seventy-five surveys with a target of twenty-five returns. Libraries serving populations fewer than ten thousand were sent thirty surveys with a target of ten returns.

The survey was distributed by library staff to adults and young adults (high school age or older). The participating libraries were instructed to distribute the survey to patrons throughout the library, not just in the public Internet access area. This helped guarantee representation of library patrons who were engaged in other activities at the time of the survey. The surveys were handed out on two different days—one weekend day and one weekday. They were divided evenly among morning, afternoon, and evening patrons. Several libraries made photocopies of the survey form and returned more surveys than they were originally issued. Table 1 shows the number of completed surveys returned by libraries serving different size populations as well as the subtotals of the state’s legal service area population whom those returns were weighted to represent.

Survey responses were tabulated by sex, age, race, income, and education level.

Overall Findings

People from all walks of life rely on computer and Internet access provided by public libraries. The technology have-nots...
Internet access: patrons relying on public libraries for they span all demographics. Of the patrons under age eighteen has no other place to access the Internet.

The results draw attention to the diversity of patrons using libraries in the twenty-first century. Public libraries are no longer places catering to an audience dominated by women and children. Public library access to computers and the Internet presents all community members with opportunities to learn new technology skills, communicate on a global level, and access Internet-based information regarding education, government, health, employment, and volunteer and recreational opportunities. Most public libraries also offer the benefits of licensed electronic databases and staff expertise and training. As a result, technology have-nots are participating in the growing world of digital communication and information.

Of Coloradans who visited public libraries in March 2002:
- Eighty-two percent indicated that the availability of computers in the library was one of the reasons for visiting the library that day;
- Sixty-seven percent have no other access to the Internet except through library computers; and
- Nineteen percent rely on staff assistance to learn new technology skills.

These findings have strong implications for public libraries. They indicate that the demand for the technology infrastructure continues to increase and that the skill set of library staff must continue to expand. As library patrons grow more diverse, the role of librarians as teachers becomes even more pronounced in the twenty-first century. Libraries and librarians are a vital part of advancement and the educational process for the communities they serve.

Who Are Public Library Internet Users?

Patrons at public libraries in Colorado use computers regularly. More than half of the respondents used the computers more than once a week; 12 percent of the overall respondents indicated that they use the Internet more than once a day (see figure 1). Increased frequency correlates with increased age, higher levels of education, and lower income:
- Age—almost half of the respondents over age thirty used public library computers more than once a week;
- Education—more than one-third of the respondents using the public Internet computers more than once a week had at least a bachelor’s degree;
- Income—nearly one-third of the respondents who used library Internet access more than once a week were below poverty level.

Race and gender, however, had no significant impact on frequency. The Colorado study reports that Internet use by men and women in public libraries was almost equal, 53 percent were men and 47 percent were women. These numbers reflect the national trend found in the National Telecommunications and Information Administration report A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet (2002). The U.S. Department of Commerce tracks statistical information regarding Internet use by men and women. Based on the data from the past seven years, early in the technology boom women were less likely than men to use the Internet from any location. Through the 1990s, the percentage of women using the Internet has continued to increase. It is likely that the availability of Internet access in public libraries has helped increase the number of female users and, at the same time, attract the less traditional male patron.

The majority of respondents (46 percent) were between the ages of thirty and fifty-four, followed by 33 percent between eighteen and twenty-nine, 12 percent over age fifty-five, and 10 percent under age eighteen.

Not all library patrons working on the computers and accessing the Internet through public libraries are newbies to technology. The majority of Colorado respondents indicated more than three years of prior Internet experience. (See figure 2.) The exception to this is found when exploring age, race, and education as outlined below.

Demographic Factors Associated with Years of Internet Use

The study found that significant factors associated with years of Internet use were race/ethnicity and education.

| Income—| | La...
Age
Library Patrons that were younger than eighteen and older than fifty-five had the least amount of Internet experience.

- Of respondents between ages eighteen and twenty-nine, 42 percent indicated more than five years of previous Internet use.
- Only 22 percent of respondents under eighteen and 27 percent of those age fifty-five and older indicated the same level of experience.

Race/Ethnicity
A significant decline in prior Internet use was found in African-American and Hispanic public library patrons.

- Out of all respondents, African-American and Hispanic participants had the least experience with the Internet. In fact, 20 percent of African-Americans indicated less than one year of previous Internet use, and 44 percent of Hispanics had less than two years of previous Internet use. This is compared with 70 percent of white respondents indicating more than three years of previous Internet use.

Education
Patrons with more than five years of Internet experience were more likely to be high school and college graduates. Of respondents with more than five years of previous Internet experience:

- forty-seven percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher;
- thirty-four percent were high school graduates; and
- nineteen percent had not attained a high school diploma.

Measuring the Impact of Computers in Public Libraries
Public libraries provide the primary Internet access point for a substantial portion of every age group of library users:

- forty-eight percent of those under age eighteen;
- sixty-six percent of those between ages eighteen and fifty-four; and
- eighty-five percent of respondents over age fifty-five.

Public libraries not only provide a primary access point to the Internet, they provide opportunities to learn and improve technology skills (see figure 3). Online searching was the skill most likely to be learned or improved in public libraries, indicating that the role of information access provider remains the same for public libraries as the format of information changes. The Internet is just the latest information medium.

Demographic Factors Influencing Types of Activities Learned
Significant factors found to influence the types of activities learned were age, race/ethnicity, education, and income.

Age
While using library computers, respondents under eighteen years of age were twice as likely as users of other ages to learn or improve word processing skills (26 percent) and work on Web development skills (22 percent).

Race/Ethnicity
Many minority respondents utilize public library computers to bridge the technology divide they are faced with. Fundamental skills such as searching the Internet, sending e-mail, and using word processing programs are the most common pursuits.

- sixty-six percent of all minority respondents improved search strategies;
- fifty-five percent of Hispanic respondents improved e-mail skills;
- twenty-one percent of African-American respondents use library computers to improve Web development skills, nearly three times more than white respondents; and
- thirty-three percent of African-American respondents improved word processing skills, twice the number of white respondents.

Education
People with a bachelor’s degree or higher were the least likely to improve or acquire new search, e-mail, word processing, or Web-development skills through the library.

Income
Once again, fundamental skills such as using e-mail and word processing programs are the focus of those library patrons faced with poverty.

- forty-eight percent of those improving e-mail skills were below poverty level; and
- twenty-seven percent of respondents below poverty level improved word processing skills at the library, compared to 13 percent of respondents making more than $50,000.

With progressive improvement of interactive resources, self-learning dominates:

- sixty-nine percent of new technology skills were self-taught; and
- twenty-four percent of new technology skills were learned through staff assistance (see figure 4).

Factors That Influence How New Technology Skills Are Acquired
Significant factors influencing the ways in which new technology skills are acquired include age, race/ethnicity, income, and education.
Age
Older patrons with less computer experience rely on Internet access through public libraries, staff assistance, and library courses more than any other group. This might suggest that people older than age fifty-five use public library technology more than any other age group because of the availability of help.

Race/Ethnicity
Approximately 17 percent of Asian-Pacific Islanders utilized library courses to acquire new skills. This is two to three times more often than any other group.

Income
Of respondents learning new skills through a library course, 20 percent were below poverty level.

Education
- As educational attainment increases, patrons were more likely to ask staff for help or enroll in a library computer course.
- Of those patrons lacking high school diplomas, 76 percent indicated that new technology skills were self-taught (learned without staff assistance), compared to 58 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

What Are Public Library Computers Used for?
To assess the impact of technology in Colorado libraries, respondents were asked to select from six categories of specific activities engaged in as a result of their recent use of the computers. See figure 5 for a list of activities.

The most widely engaged in activities were:
- sixty-nine percent—looking for information on a specific topic;
- fifty-six percent—e-mail;
- forty-six percent—surfing the Web;
- thirty-eight percent—staying in touch with someone;
- thirty-six percent—looking for a job;
- twenty percent—seeking educational opportunities; and
- nineteen percent—finding health-related information for self, friend, or relative.

What has the Greatest Impact on Internet Use?
Descriptive statistics do not suffice to explain completely why one group of individuals has higher or lower rates of computer use and Internet use. Three factors that appear to influence Internet activity are income, level of education, and age. A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet reports that education and income have independent effects on Internet use. “People who have lower education but live in households with high family incomes are less likely to be Internet users than those who have high levels of education and live in households with low family income.”2 One out of four Colorado

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**How Library Patrons Learn New Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-taught</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library course</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff help</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**How Library Patrons Spend Computer Time**

**General**
- Surf the Web for information on a specific topic.
- Send and receive personal e-mail.
- Read and post to newsgroups, bulletin boards, or electronic lists

**Educational**
- Look for an educational program.
- Work on or complete a school assignment.
- Participate in a distance learning activity.

**Business/Career**
- Look for a job.
- Increase income/get a promotion.
- Complete a certification.
- Obtain legal documents needed for business purposes.
- Conduct research for current employer.

**Consumer / Financial**
- Purchase or sell a home or rental property.
- Buy or sell personal items.
- Find health-related information for a friend, a relative, or self.
- Improve own or a family member's health.
- Locate a doctor or dentist.
- Trade and monitor stocks and investments.

**Community Information**
- Find a service in community such as child/elder care facility, public transportation, Meals on Wheels, etc.
- Locate information concerning social programs; such as applying for Medicaid, food stamps, Kids in Need of Dentistry, or section 8 housing.
- Find volunteer opportunities.
- Locate community center, church, club, or other community-based organization.
- Locate information about candidates and issues before voting.

**Recreational**
- Surf the Internet for fun.
- Participate in online chatting.
- Play interactive games.
- Listen to music.
- Stay in touch with someone that otherwise wouldn’t be possible.
respondents was below poverty level. Costs of hardware, software licensing, and network capabilities are still relatively high and one of the obvious elements of digital exclusion. Responding to this need is one of the most important aspects of digital inclusion.

**Income**
Income is one factor that appears to influence Internet activity:

- Poor respondents used the Internet for recreation more than any other group.
- Once income exceeds $25,000 most recreational uses of the Internet decline markedly.
- Sixty-five percent of poor respondents use public Internet computers to send and receive e-mail. This was more than any other income group.
- Fifty-two percent of the poor respondents surf the Web for fun.
- Forty-four percent of respondents looking for educational programs on public library computers have annual incomes less than $19,000.
- Thirty-five percent of people looking for a job were below poverty level.
- Thirty-three percent of respondents using public Internet computers to stay in touch with someone were below poverty level.
- Twenty-nine percent of respondents using public library terminals for distance education were below poverty level.
- Twenty-eight percent of those seeking information on social programs were below poverty level.
- Twenty-seven percent of people looking for volunteer opportunities were below poverty level.
- Twenty-two percent of poor respondents used public Internet computers to complete a school assignment.
- Nineteen percent of all the respondents who use public library computers to look for community services were below poverty level.
- Sixteen percent of poor respondents participate in online chat.
- Fifteen percent of poor respondents play interactive games.
- Ten percent of poor respondents listen to music.

**Educational Level**
Educational level affects what library patrons do with Internet time.

- Online chat at public Internet computers was three times more likely for people who haven’t gone to college.
- As educational level increases, patrons are more likely to ask staff for help or sign up for a library course.
- Sixty-eight percent of people without high school diplomas surf for fun, while only 41 percent of people with bachelor’s degree or higher do so.
- Forty-six percent of the people using public Internet computers to locate services within the community had a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- Interactive gaming and streaming music declines when education increases.
- Forty-one percent of those looking for a job via public Internet computers have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

**Age**
Kids use the Internet differently than adults. Respondents under the age of
eighteen engage in a wider array of activities than any other age group. Kids are more likely to:

- Look for specific information—73 percent
- Surf the Internet for fun—71 percent
- Work on or complete school assignments—60 percent
- Look for educational programs—29 percent
- Play games—29 percent
- Chat—28 percent
- Listen to music—22 percent
- Look for volunteer opportunities—13 percent

Kids are least likely to:

- Use the Internet for e-mail—43 percent
- Locate information concerning a social program—8 percent

Other areas where kids had the lowest response rate were age-restrictive activities such as trading and monitoring stocks, and looking up candidate information before voting.

Respondents over the age of fifty-five have less variation in their Internet activities. Older adults were most likely to:

- Find health-related information for a friend, a relative, or self—31 percent
- Trade or monitor stocks—17 percent
- Improve their own health or health of a family member—10 percent
- Purchase or sell a home or rental property—6 percent

Other areas where older adults had the lowest response rate were related to education and employment. Older adults were least likely to:

- Look for specific information—62 percent
- Use the Internet to stay in touch with someone—31 percent
- Surf the Internet for fun—28 percent
- Look for educational programs—9 percent
- Look for community centers—9 percent
- Conduct research for an employer—7 percent
- Post to a news group or bulletin board—5 percent
- Look for state information—4 percent
- Look for volunteer opportunities—4 percent
- Play games—3 percent
- Listen to music—3 percent
- Increase income—3 percent
- Chat—2 percent
- Obtain legal documents for business purposes—2 percent

Conclusion

Computers and the Internet are vital parts of everyday life. They provide a doorway to information on a global level and expand the reach of every community. Ensuring all community members access to electronic resources and developing the technical skills to participate in the global economy are important contributions of public libraries to their communities and to the state.

Colorado public libraries provide 2,297 computers for public use, of which 1,492 provide Internet access, costing $2,576,885 annually. Internet access through public libraries is an active step in bridging the Digital Divide. Community members who would otherwise be left behind actively use these public resources. More than two-thirds of the library patrons polled have no other access to the Internet except through library computers. Without this freely available resource, many people would be limited in their ability to access information, find opportunities, and compete globally in the growing digital environment.

Coloradoans from all demographics rely on Internet access at public libraries. They are learning new technology skills from library staff members and library courses as well as teaching themselves and learning from friends and family.

As education and income rise, use of the Internet also rises, leading to increased access to global information. Properly trained library staff will increase awareness of valuable online resources and help the technologically disadvantaged develop new skills that can be used daily in the information age. By providing public access to the Internet, Colorado public libraries are fulfilling a mission to “Give instruction unto those who cannot procure it for themselves.”

References

2. Ibid.

PLA Publications

PLA offers its members the best resources for career advancement, problem solving, continuing education, and library information, written by public library staff members for public library staff members. *Forming and Funding Public Library Foundations, 2d ed.*, *A Guide to Research @ Your Library*, *The Public Librarian’s Guide to Consumer Health Information*, and *Weeding Manual* are just a few of our recent releases. Check out our entire publications list at www.pla.org or call 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5752, to have the list and order form mailed to you.
Safety Office asking how the administration planned to address the situation, it became clear that a problem existed with the circulation desk.

Research started with *Ergonomic Design Guidelines for Libraries*, a publication by the Vancouver Public Library in the early 1990s. The following quote from that publication summed up the situation succinctly:

> It may be a surprise to all but library workers that many library tasks resemble those of industry. Library work has elements of heavy lifting, pushing and pulling, repetitive hand-arm and shoulder motions, skilled decision-making, concentrated interactions with technology, and requirements for communication with the public. The weight and volume of materials that are manually handled can be likened to combined assembly and warehousing functions. A large central public library may handle 2.5 million loan transactions per year.

An ergonomics committee made up of staff and supervisors was formed, brainstorming sessions were conducted with the circulation staff, and the following quick fixes were set in place with varying success:

- Small platforms were designed and built for shorter people to stand on (photo 2). However, these were continually being hunted for, tripped over, and cursed by other staff.
- Stacking plastic monitor lifts were installed to raise the height of the check-out and check-in computer terminals, but these were not instantly adjustable for individual heights (photo 3).
- A chair was placed by the check-in drop box so that staff didn’t have to bend over to retrieve items.
- Each check-out terminal was equipped with its own set of supplies (date stamps, library cards, pens, pencils, etc.) to eliminate reaching and stretching (photo 4).
- Foot rails were added to allow staff the option of resting one foot while standing for longer periods of time (photo 5).
- Video box openers were purchased to eliminate the hand motions...
required in opening the boxes on check out and check in.3

A table was added to the circulation area to allow staff to sit and work during lulls in traffic (photo 6).

Related and additional changes included the purchase of six wheeled book carts for greater maneuverability by staff and pages.4 The ergonomics committee decided that two shelves only per side would be filled with returned materials to lessen the weight of pushing heavy book carts through the circ area and stacks. Single-sided carts were purchased for easier handling in the stacks. Shelves were added to the audiovisual rental closet (located in the circ area and administered by the staff) to reverse the haphazard arrangements of screens, projectors, etc. This change eliminated the bending over and picking up of heavy equipment.

These quick fixes improved the work area, but it soon became obvious that professional help was required with the continuing ergonomic issues. The library decided to hire an ergonomics consultant. The role of the ergonomics consultant is to blend his or her knowledge of the body and injury mechanisms with the knowledge of the job held by the staff to determine optimum solutions that will work within the identified constraints.

A request for proposal (RFP) for an ergonomist was prepared and sent out. This RFP described the staffing complement, the numbers of materials handled by the staff, the current setup of the circulation area, and quick-fix measures taken to address the situation. The proposals from the respondents reflected this information, which was described as being very useful in creating an understanding of the library’s situation.

Margo Fraser, an ergonomics consultant from Calgary, was hired. She observed the staff at work, took measurements, interviewed staff, and videotaped their actions. Since this was a retrofit of an existing building, Fraser gathered information on the physical constraints that could impact the final redesign. This included the location of the doors off the circulation area and the inability to move the circulation counter and the security gates due to funding limitations.

Concerns and Recommendations

As the consultant became familiar with the job tasks, she proposed various solutions to the staff and elicited their feedback on the feasibility in light of other library tasks or constraints. Fraser then prepared a report detailing the concerns and recommendations for each of the tasks reviewed, and provided drawings of the proposed layout and potential vendor contact information. The concerns with the adult circulation area and the proposed solutions are outlined in the following section.

Flooring

The flooring in the circulation area was carpet and underlay over cement. This hard surface combined with the prolonged standing and walking required in the circulation area resulted in lower limb and back fatigue.

Fraser recommended using antifatigue matting throughout the area to provide cushioning while still being firm enough to allow the book trucks to roll easily over it. A matting was found that was available in tiles (designed for forklift trucks in factory settings), and this was used to cover the complete floor within the circulation area.5 Bevelled edges were added where the matting met the carpeted flooring. After implementation, the staff reported that the new flooring had substantially reduced lower limb and back symptoms. Pushing fully loaded book trucks was slightly more difficult, but this was considered a minor problem in relationship to the overall gains in comfort and fatigue reduction.

Work Triangle

The overall work triangle in the circulation area was much too large, and required items were not easily within reach. When the new addition had been built, the architects created a spacious circulation area without in-depth knowledge of the types of tasks that were required. The staff had to remove the items from the return box and then carry them a distance of approximately twelve feet to a back counter where the computer for check in was located (photo 7). This resulted in unnecessary handling and carrying of the books, adding to the stresses on the back and upper limbs. The cash register was also located on the back counter requiring circulation staff to walk back to it to process payments (photo 9).
To reduce the work triangle, a new check-in station was created with a height-adjustable table adjacent to the return box (photo 8). The surface height is adjusted electrically to accommodate the various heights of the staff members. The books are now moved directly to the table for check-in, eliminating the carrying task. There is enough space in the area for the book trucks to be placed adjacent to the surface so that they can be loaded immediately. The sensitizer has been embedded into the surface so that the books do not have to be lifted as they are resensitized.

The cash register was moved from the back surface (photo 9) and relocated between the two check-out areas for easier access. To ensure that it was not too high for shorter staff members, it was embedded into the counter (photo 10).

**Check-Out Counter**

The original check-out counter was forty inches high. This was too high for most staff members but too low for others. As previously noted, the range of heights of staff members resulted in some reaching up and others bending forward, and the quick-fix platforms provided became a tripping hazard.

There is only one way to accommodate all staff heights: create a work surface that can adjust easily to the height required for each person. Therefore, the recommended solution was made to provide height-adjustable surfaces with a range of at least twenty-eight inches to forty-two inches from the floor. The staff members work in rotation from one check-out station to another, and therefore the height adjustment needed to be quick and easy to do. Combined with the staff need for adjustability is the need...
to maintain the aesthetics of the check-out area from the patron side of the counter. As the counter is raised, there cannot be an open space between the surface and the wall on the patron side creating both a pinch point, which would be a safety hazard, and an unpleasant view of the wires and cables for the electronic equipment. Therefore, a panel fixed to the patron side of the surface that telescopes inside of the wall, and fits closely to it, was recommended. A vendor was found to supply electrically controlled height-adjustable legs that could be fixed to any surface. The circulation counter surface was cut out at the two check-out areas, and the vendor created a matching surface on the height-adjustable legs. He then added a telescoping panel on the patron side to eliminate pinch points and maintain aesthetics (photo 11). The staff are now able to raise or lower the surface to a height that allows them to keep their shoulders relaxed and work with the upper arms relaxed at the sides of the body (photo 12). In the four years since...
installation, the staff has continued to make the appropriate surface height adjustments. The benefits of the height adjustability have extended beyond the staff to the patrons as the surfaces can be lowered to accommodate those individuals using a wheelchair.

To further enhance the ability of the staff to adjust the workstation to match their needs, the computer monitors were placed on height-adjustable arms (photo 12). These arms can be moved forward, back, up, and down to accommodate individual vision and can be rotated easily to show patrons the screen when required.

The consultant recommended embedding the desensitizing devices into the counter to reduce the need to lift the materials, thereby reducing the stresses on the hands and arms. To date this has only been done for the media resensitizers and one book/cd desensitizer, as a fixed location does not accommodate the various work methods of the staff. Ideally, eliminating the task of sensitizing and desensitizing items would be preferred (such as through the use of a pass-through security system).

**Laser Pen Use**

A number of staff reported upper limb discomfort (shoulders, arms, hands) resulting from the amount of handling of books and checking materials in and out with a laser pen. Pinch grips such as those used to hold the pen or grasp thinner books place particularly large stresses on the tendons of the hands. While some of the recommendations discussed above helped to reduce book handling, a further recommendation was to provide alternate devices that eliminate grasping, such that the books could be moved under/over them to read the bar code. While the pens are still the primary bar code reader, the library is actively investigating and testing alternatives.

**Phone Use**

The circulation counter staff often answer patron inquiries on the phone or make calls to provide information to patrons. The phones are located on the back surface and have a long cord from the handset to allow the staff to walk back to the check-out counter or about the area to access the computer or files needed for the call. Shoulder rests had been attached to the handsets; however, these do very little to decrease the stress on the neck tissues. The cord from the handset to the base also gets stretched across the space between the back counter and check-out counter creating a hazard for others in the area. Therefore, a recommendation was made to provide cordless headsets for the phones. Because of the prohibitive cost of these headsets, it was decided to try the less expensive corded headsets which have now been tried out successfully at the fiction desk and the circulation counter.

**Summary**

The following lessons were learned from this process. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of considering

![Photo 12: Final circulation counter inserts demonstrating the range of heights that can be accommodated.](image-url)
ergonomics at the design stage rather than later on. Inattention to ergonomically planned designs can result in expensive WCB (Workers Compensation Board—each province in Canada has its own WCB) claims, sick leave coverage, and the eventual and more costly retrofit of the work areas. In the end it is a case of pay now or pay later. In retrospect, Medicine Hat Public Library was trying to fit the staff to the counter—the ergonomics consultant turned this around to tailor the counter to the staff needs.

Staff involvement and input in the design stage is crucial—after all, these are the people who will be working in the area day after day. In Medicine Hat Public Library’s experience, blueprints were the main vehicle to show the plans; 3D CAD designs would have helped the staff to better visualize the final result.

Not all of the consultant’s recommendations could be implemented within the scope and funding expense of the project. For example, the back counter continues to be too low, especially for the taller staff, resulting in forward bending. It was important to prioritize the recommendations so that those with the largest impact to staff well-being and safety were implemented first.

Once recommendations have been implemented, training of the staff in the proper use of new equipment and technology and in appropriate working postures and setup is important so that they are knowledgeable in, and have responsibility for, creating a healthy working environment for themselves.

The changes that were made by the library to the circulation area before, and in response to, the consultant’s recommendations have resulted in a work environment for staff that is more comfortable, productive, and safe. The risk of injury resulting from physical stressors has been reduced. A further benefit has been increased morale with the library administration and board demonstrating the importance of staff comfort and well-being, fostering an atmosphere of respect and cordiality.

References and Notes

2. Ibid.
3. The video box opener (Video Hand Saver) is available from Brodart at www.brodart.com.
5. The floor matting vendor was Matta Products; see www.matta.co.nz for distributors and products.
6. The vendor for height-adjustable legs for the circulation counter surfaces was SIS. See www.sis-int.com for local distributors.
Bohrer Begins Term as President of the Public Library Association

Clara Nalli Bohrer, Director of the West Bloomfield Township (Mich.) Public Library, officially began her term as president of PLA, with the conclusion of the 2004 ALA Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida.

Bohrer has said that she will focus on leading the association forward in completing strategic plan initiatives—particularly in the areas of training and knowledge transfer, emergent literacy, and recruitment—during her term as president. “I look forward to my term as PLA President, and all of the challenges and opportunities that it presents; in addition I hope to effect an increase in continuing education opportunities for our members on a regional basis and/or an electronic basis,” said the new president.

Bohrer has been an active ALA member since 1980 and has served on the board of directors for both PLA and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). In addition, she has chaired a number of committees for ALA, PLA, and ALSC. These include the ALA Standards Committee, 1989–1991; the PLA President’s Events Committee, which she chaired 1997–1999; the 1998 PLA National Conference Program Committee; the PLA Conference Program Coordinating Committee, 1994–1997; the PLA/ALSC Committee on Output Measures for Children’s Services, 1989–1992; and the PLA Services to Children Committee, 1985–1988. Most recently, she served as conference chairperson for the 2004 PLA National Conference, which was held in Seattle, Washington, February 24–28. Bohrer has also served as a member of several other association committees.

Along with her ALA responsibilities, Bohrer is active in a number of other professional groups, including the Urban Libraries Council. She served on the board of directors and as president of the Michigan Library Association, and on the board of directors for the Greater West Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce. She is currently president elect of the West Bloomfield Chapter of Optimist International. She is also an experienced speaker and workshop organizer. In the past, she has planned and coordinated programming (as program chairperson) for the 1998 PLA National Conference, as well as seminars for the “Building” workshops held during PLA’s Spring Symposia in 1999 and 2001.

Bohrer received a B.A. in Education from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1973, an M.S.L.S. from Wayne State University in 1976, and a Master of Arts in Education from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, in 1984.

For more information, please phone 1-800-545-2433, ext. SPLA.

2004 PLA Election Results

Please join PLA in congratulating our newly elected officers and board members. All terms began after the 2004 ALA Annual Conference.

- Vice President/President Elect
  Daniel L. Walters
- Issues and Concerns Cluster Steering Committee
  Anne Marie Gold
  Mario M. Gonzalez
- Library Development Cluster Steering Committee
  Jose Antonio Aponte
  Kendi L. Kelley
- Library Services Cluster Steering Committee
  Carol L. Sheffer
  Arthur L. Weeks

2004 Public Library Data Service Statistical Report Now Available

The 2004 Public Library Data Service (PLDS) Statistical Report is now available for purchase. Since 1988 the PLA has collected data from North American public libraries on financial information, library resources and per capita measures, annual use figures, technology, circulation, and more. This year’s report uses data collected from more than one thousand public libraries. The 2004 PLDS Statistical Report (ISBN 0-8389-268-9) is $80 per copy list price; ALA and PLA members are eligible for discounts.

For more information about the PLDS project, please phone the PLA office, 1-800-545-2433, ext. SPLA. To place an order call ALA’s order department at 1-866-Shop ALA (1-866-746-7252).

Public Library Data Service Custom Searching

Need quick, accurate information on how your library compares to other North American libraries? The PLA/Public Library Data Service (PLDS) Custom Search has your answers! All of the information currently in the database (1988–2003) is available to you. The basic fee is $65 for PLDS participants, $120 for nonparticipants. This fee covers consultation with the client, approximately one hour of data analysis, and preparation of a tabular or graphic report. For projects requiring work beyond this, additional time will be billed at an hourly rate of $40 for PLDS participants and $80 for nonparticipants. A not-to-exceed estimate can be given to the client before work begins if additional work will be required.

To order your PLDS Custom Search, contact the University of Illinois, Library Research Center, (217) 333-1980.
Bibliostat Connect

For an even more comprehensive statistical overview, visit Bibliostat Connect (www.informata.com), a customizable database of library statistics drawn from information in the PLDS report, the Federal State Cooperative System, and each state’s own annual statistical report.

Plan to Attend the 2005 PLA Spring Symposium

Registration opens on September 1, 2004, for the 2005 PLA Spring Symposium. Registration forms will be mailed to all PLA members and also will be available online at www.pla.org. The 2005 Symposium will feature the following programs:

- **Choices, Choices, Choices, Sandra Nelson**
  This day-long program will provide you with a model for decision-making that will help you define a problem, identify and evaluate all of the options for resolving the problem, and select the most effective option for your circumstances.

- **The Future of Libraries, Stephen Abram, Vice-President of Innovation, Sirsi Corporation**
  Hear our speaker share his insights into what trends are near and clear and what are the ones for which we can take a more wait-and-see approach. Technology trends aren’t just about the wires and software—they’re about how we can improve our users’ lives. Stephen Abram reports on these trends and inspire us to apply new technologies to make our learners and communities soar.

- **Millennial Users: Different. You Bet!, Stephen Abram, Vice-President of Innovation, Sirsi Corporation**
  Stephen Abram is the coauthor of the May 1, 2004, *Library Journal* cover story “Born with a Chip” that describes the nine key generational mutations that affect libraries with respect to our successfully delivering services to the Millennials. Libraries may not thrive if we don’t adapt to the Google generation while still working to develop the services they’ll also need well into the end of this century. This is a half-day program.

- **Creating Policies for Result, June Garcia, Library Consultant**
  This one-day workshop, taught by June Garcia, one of the book’s coauthors, will provide library staff who are responsible for writing their library’s policies with the information they need to make the best use of the books exercises and templates. Participants will leave this program ready to complete a policy audit, write or revise policies, and communicate effectively about the library’s policies with the board, the staff, and the public.

- **Every Child Ready to Read Training Workshop**
  Promoting early literacy is part of what public libraries do on a daily basis, yet many parents and other caregivers do not know the importance of early literacy or how to develop pre-reading skills in their children. Research shows that children get ready to read years before they start school, and libraries can play a critical role in helping children develop those skills. The Every Child Ready to Read @ your library® training provides librarians with a proven program on the latest in early literacy research and gives them the tools they need to help parents and caregivers help their children get ready to read. Participants in the one-day workshop will be trained to present programs for parents and caregivers of children in three age groups—early talkers (children from birth to two), talkers (children two to three years old), and pre-readers (children four to five years old)—and will return to their libraries ready to share this important message with their colleagues and their communities.

- **Strategic Library Marketing; Library Communication Strategies**
  Peggy Barber and Linda Wallace present two half-day workshops on library marketing and building a marketing communication plan.

  In addition, the Best of Reaching Forward, a Forum for Library Assistants, will include:

  - **Dealing with Change while Providing Excellent Service, Illinois Library Association**
    This workshop will explore the cycles of change and the human reactions to it, as well as discovering successful implementation strategies for change. We will also identify the warning signs that it is time for change.

  - **Building Staff Morale in Confusing Times**
    Hear and discuss specific strategies for building and maintaining staff morale and commitment during times of change and confusion.

  - **Teamquest: Making All Staff Part of Your Security Plan**
    This program will focus on identifying and improving vulnerable areas and developing measures to stay mentally prepared.

  - **Lead by Example: Developing Yourself and Your Staff**
    A panel of library managers will discuss how they have demonstrated and fostered leadership in their institutions, focusing on the importance of developing leaders among library assistants.

This information is tentative and subject to change. Please check the PLA Web site, www.pla.org, for updates and more information.
Storytime Action! 2000+ Ideas for Making 500 Picture Books Interactive

In the introduction to Storytime Action! author Bromann encourages readers to “break with tradition” by having activities come from within the books during storytime rather than in-between titles. She cites several other guides to storytimes that instruct librarians to keep the story sacred and to never break it up with activities or questions. Bromann feels that this is the wrong approach and cites ways to make an interactive approach work. As in her title Booktalking That Works (Neal-Schumann, 2001), Bromann takes lots of favorite books, including a few unusual ones, and discusses how to use them in new ways to attract readers. This dynamic yet common-sense approach may require that librarians let go of some traditional methods of planning theme-centered programs.

While the 2000+ ideas provided as advertised are practical, lots of other help is also provided in the first two chapters of the book. There is a list of “Top Ten Interactive Elements” complete with strategies to use with any book. One of the best features of this book is the list of twenty-five types of crafts in chapter 2 that can easily be made with young children and adapted to any book. Many of these are known to librarians in some form or another, but this would be very handy in quickly preparing materials for a program. Crafts range from the favorite bookmark to the more creative planters and magic wands.

The need for themes is virtually eliminated from programs through this title, although they could be developed in conjunction with a classroom unit or special situations. This is because all activities in the program stem from the stories themselves, although a thorough theme index is provided to help begin the process. Bromann advertises that developing the techniques described in this book will cut program planning time down to less than an hour. Librarians should no longer have to search through felt board or fingerplay reference guides to fit a theme.

This approach could easily get children more involved in the stories. New librarians will find this title an especially useful reference. Recommended for both school and public libraries.—Amy Alessio, Teen Coordinator, Schaumburg Township (Ill.) District Library.

Pioneers and Leaders in Library Services to Youth: A Biographical Dictionary

“Inspired by the belief that library service to youth deserves a more dynamic representation in library history and biography” (xiii), this one-volume biographical dictionary was designed to fill in some holes in a prior Libraries Unlimited publication, The Dictionary of American Library Biography (1978) and its two supplements, which included only a few youth services people. Forty reprints from those volumes are added to fifty-seven original essays here.

The sketches, with a few exceptions, begin with information on the subject’s family background and education, followed by professional career and contributions and a list of biographical listings, obituaries, books and articles by and about the person, and primary source collections, if known. All the people are deceased and were chosen by an advisory committee. Those making national contributions are emphasized, but people with regional impact are also included, such as Ruth Gagliardo, the “book lady” of Kansas, as well as some nonlibrarians such as Irvin Kerlan, whose personal collection of children’s books, manuscripts, and illustrations provided the basis for what is now an internationally renowned research center at the University of Minnesota. The earliest person born is Hannah Packard James in 1835, who pioneered school libraries; the latest is Michael L. Printz born in 1937, for whom YALSA’s Printz Award is named, with just about everyone I could think of in between.

This is an exceptionally valuable book because of its specific historical emphasis on youth services leaders and professional contributors, its useful arrangement and readability, the listings of other sources on the subjects, and because its existence sets a publishing precedent for further works of its kind. Unfortunately, except for library history buffs, its use at the local library level is limited, but it should be included in public library systems’ children’s, young adult, or youth services coordinators’ offices or professional collections. It should also be a required purchase for LIS school faculty and professional collections.—Mary K. Cheulton, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Library & Information Science, Queens College, N.Y.

Empowering Your Library: A Guide to Improving Service, Productivity, and Participation

Without a doubt, human resources are the most costly expense in any business or organization. This succinct guide provides a road map for deploying these resources to their best advantage, important at any time and crucial in times of fiscal crisis. The need for full use of an organization’s human resources is particularly vital in this perfect storm of budget cuts and competition from retail information outlets. Author Connie Christopher does a solid job of laying out the case for an empowered staff, noting that much of the rationale for empowerment lies in the necessity of competition: for funding, for customers, and for staff.

Christopher explores how empowerment can help meet these challenges, distilling from the field of organizational psychology methods that most, if not all, libraries can use. With useful graphics, Christopher outlines key ideas, such as self-directed learning, motivation, communication and creating a shared vision. She also includes...
books, filmstrips, videos, storytelling, singing, dancing, poetry, finger plays, crafts, and discussions. Story hours typically end with book talks of related books that the preschoolers can check out, followed by a simple take-home activity to reinforce what the children learned during the story hour program.

Unlike many libraries that utilize age-specific programs, Kladder’s philosophy presents a multi-age group program with a thirty to forty-five minute duration, depending on the group’s attention span. Librarians who prefer the age-specific story hour will still find this book helpful, however, and should not be deterred from purchasing it for this reason. This title is designed to allow librarians to pick and choose which activities are appropriate for their programs.

Organized into eight themes of four to eight topics each, Story Hour also includes individual seasonal and holiday story ideas. The ideas comprise several ways librarians can share stories, including reading aloud from the book while showing illustrations, storytelling without books, having children re-tell stories, or showing a video presentation of the story.

Themes, such as Barnyard Animals, are broken down into six subtopics (ducks and geese, chickens, pigs/cows/horses/donkeys, sheep and goats, and barns/farms and all the animals). This particular theme presents life in a barnyard both realistically and imaginatively. Ideas for presenting information in both realistic and fictionalized settings are designed to help preschoolers identify characteristics of animals while separating reality from fantasy.

Each of the six subtopics consists of name tag ideas (usually in the shape of the day’s topic), a list of suggested films, videos, and books to go along with topic, fingerplay suggestions, poetry and music recommendations, additional titles, and a listing of suggested activities relating to the day’s topic.

Activities are presented with the intention of reinforcing children’s understanding of the story hour’s topic. Annotations of the suggested book titles help librarians determine the appropriateness of each book for their particular group of preschoolers, while detailed listings of related filmstrips, 16 mm films, videos, songs, and poems provide ideas for enrichment.

Other themes included in Story Hour are the Caldecott Medal, Colors, Families, Feast of Stories, Five Senses, Reptiles and Amphibians, Around the World, and Holidays and Seasonal Events.

Included at the end of Story Hour are bibliographies for all of the listed media in the various chapters, as well as an author index and title index. Librarians will find these useful when looking for ideas to incorporate particular books into their story hour programs. The professional resources bibliography lists helpful bibliographical references to several titles written by knowledgeable educators and librarians.

Potential purchasers of this book should note that actual directions/lyrics/poems, etc. are not provided. Kladder simply provides annotated listings with the necessary bibliographic information needed to locate the book where the particular song or poem can be found. Librarians looking for a guide with directions included may prefer Ready-To-Go Storytimes: Fingerplays, Scripts, Patterns, Music, and More by Gail Benton and Trisha Waichulaitis (Neal-Schuman, 2003).--Cathie Bashaw Morton, MLS/Children’s Teacher/Librarian, Somers (N.Y.) Library

The Librarian’s Guide to Writing for Publication


Busy librarians who write because they want to share their knowledge with colleagues, develop themselves as professionals, and set themselves apart from others. One issue that aspiring writers discuss with me on occasion is how to get started. My answer to them is to continue to write everyday, maybe start a weblog, read the professional and trade journals, and possibly read an introductory book on the process. I now have a title to suggest.

In her latest book, The Librarian’s Guide to Writing for Publication, veteran librarian Rachel Singer Gordon not only indulges the reader in the major points of writing for the library field, but provides, through her experience as an author, salient tips that are helpful to both experienced and beginning librarians. She takes us through the process of sending queries to publishing houses, the business of publishing (most of which many beginning librarians know little about), and marketing.

Two sections that I found particularly useful were the chapters on marketing and the appendix which contained interviews with editors at the various publishing houses. The marketing aspect was a joy to read because librarians typically lack the knowledge applicable to getting their name “out there.” There are two aspects to the publishing process: the actual writing of the piece and then making sure that the piece gets read by an audience. Some of the marketing is built-in (large publishing houses market books and articles simply by having a large distribution list), but it is sometimes up to the author to do their own “selling,” and Gordon points out numerous ways that this can be accomplished.

The interviews with the editors of magazine and book publications are a priceless addition to this book. Where better to get tips about getting work published than from the publishers themselves? The book is worth reading for this section alone.
One small issue that I had with the book is that some of the concepts were continuously repeated throughout many of the chapters. For example, Gordon discusses academic tenure in parts of three separate chapters. This was surely meant to drive home important points, but probably could have been kept to a minimum. However, this is a minor point in what is an intensely researched, well-crafted book whose suggestions will resonate with veteran writers and assist the librarian who wants to write for our profession. I kept a pad and paper handy while reading this book and had four pages of suggestions (front and back) from Gordon that I hope will assist me further as I write more in our field.—Steven Cohen, Assistant Librarian, Rivkin Radler LLP, Uniondale, N.Y.

Libraries, Mission and Marketing: Writing Mission Statements That Work


Libraries, Mission and Marketing is a slim volume that serves as a practical guide for libraries retooling their mission statements.

Linda K. Wallace, former director of ALA’s Public Information Office and current partner in the consulting firm Library Communication Strategies, is a proponent of developing a “marketing mind-set, which says that communicating about what you do is as important as doing it” (6). By developing concise, effective mission statements, rather than long, rambling treatises that no one (including library staff) can recall, the library creates a more powerful “branding statement” that identifies the library to its client base.

One key test of a good mission statement is to see if it would pass the t-shirt test, that is, would it fit on and easily be read on a t-shirt? If not, Wallace suggests it needs review. Less, in this case, is often more. Wallace further states that “most bad mission statements...instead of sounding noble, sound like to-do lists” (9). Given that the book’s focus is on mission statements, Wallace does not further explain how “to-do lists” could be translated into long-range action plans.

Wallace shares the Daly City (Calif.) Public Library’s re-vitalized mission statement as one example of how libraries can better construct this key element. In 1994, this library’s mission statement was “The Daly City Public Library is committed to providing and promoting access to materials and services that meet the needs and interests of a diverse community in a professional, helpful manner.” In 2002, its mission was rephrased to the more dynamic, “Preserving yesterday. Informing today. Inspiring tomorrow.” Chicago Public Library’s mission statement is even more succinct, “Read, Learn, Discover.”

Wallace further expands the concept of a mission statement by contrasting it with the concept of a vision statement. All library mission statements should focus on the distinct value of the individual institution. Mission statements need to be written in the present tense and reflect what is currently being offered, with a library’s vision statement moving the organization into the future to what will occur.

More than half of Libraries, Mission and Marketing is devoted to a list of more than 105 specific sample mission statements that were created for all types of libraries. Appendix A, “Model Mission Statement—School Library Media Center,” appears redundant in that several unique school library mission statements are included in the prior list; this appendix would better serve as a lead page into these statements. Appendix B, “Marketing Communication Plan Worksheet,” is a streamlined two-page introduction to this process.

Libraries, Mission and Marketing is useful in what it covers; however, it could cover additional information and be of more value, particularly to smaller libraries that may find purchasing more than one book on this topic cost-prohibitive. A book that incorporates not only creating mission statements, but showing the relationship between vision statements and long-range action plans, would more wholly address the need for, and the role of, mission statements and marketing for libraries.

Books in Brief

Annotations of Books Received But Not Reviewed


Straight from the Stacks
A Firsthand Guide to Careers in Library and Information Science


Straight from the Stacks is a vocational guide on careers in library and information science. The author, Laura Townsend Kane, who is the head of Cataloging and Acquisitions at the University of South Carolina’s School of Medicine Library in Columbia, wrote this book with a twofold purpose. First, she explains that her career in LIS was due to luck and circumstance rather than a planned career choice; she simply didn’t know enough about the profession to consider it a choice. Thinking that this may be the case for many others, she decided to write this book. Second, she wanted to help those who are already employed in LIS to learn more about the field and for students in LIS programs to make informed career decisions.

The book is divided into chapters on public librarianship, school media librarianship/child and young adult librarianship, academic librarianship, nontraditional librarianship: corporate and freelance, medical librarianship, law librarianship, and library directorship. This provides a good overview of the various directions a career in librarianship can take, especially in areas outside traditional librarianship such as information architects or corporate librarians. Each chapter contains job descriptions on positions that are within that sector of librarianship. The job descriptions cover working environment, responsibilities, education and training, and recommended memberships for each position.

As the title suggests, first-hand accounts “straight from the stacks” from professionals within each area of librarianship covered are featured in every chapter. These spotlights on professionals are what make this book unique as well as authoritative. Professionals talk about their career paths, how they got to be where they are now and what they do day to day. The reader gets a frank and honest inside look at librarianship, which differs from other vocational guides that blandly state job duties and statistics related to the profession.

This book offers a good introduction to the plethora of career choices in the field of LIS. It may assist LIS students in deciding a career path for themselves, and it reminds those of us who are already in the field of the diverse settings of LIS and the many talented professionals in our company. It will also serve as a good addition to the literature and resources on LIS to further promote our profession.—Christine Kajava, Head of Circulation/Reference Librarian, Bismarck (N.D.) Veterans Memorial Public Library

Booktalks and More
Motivating Teens to Read


As in her previous title Booktalks Plus, former English teacher Lucy Scholl has organized recent teen fiction and nonfiction into an indispensable tool for both school professionals and public librarians. Each of 100+ titles is described with a summary, a booktalk, related activities, and at least five related works.

Booktalks and More deals with important teen issues through fiction and nonfiction titles. The book is sectioned into three areas: Challenge, Achievement, and Dedication. All titles discussed within those sections were published from 1997 to 2001, setting this work apart from other booktalking manuals. Also notable is that Scholl is unafraid to choose titles dealing with controversial issues, including homosexuality, sex, and substance abuse. Another strength of this book is the diversity of material, from nonfiction to many titles with Latino and African-American characters.

The nonfiction titles are chosen for their appeal to teens, and many are well-written, important works. These include Go for the Goal by Mia Hamm, and The Nazi Olympics by Susan Bachrach.

Activities for each title are very useful in the classroom, but can certainly be applied to a public library book discussion group. The public librarian may appreciate the other recommended works listed under each title for readers’ advisory purposes as well. It is an excellent overview of important titles recently published for teens. The only missing element is notations for award winners. For example, Michael L. Printz award-winning titles are not listed as such. This title is highly recommended for school and public libraries.—Amy Alessio, Teen Coordinator, Schaumburg Township (Ill.) District Library.
Recorded Books and Film Movement Present First-Run, Award-Winning, Independent Films on DVD

Through a new subscription program offered by Recorded Books in association with Film Movement, libraries can receive an award-winning new release each month on DVD. This innovative subscription program gives libraries an easy way to acquire some of the year’s best foreign and independent films.

Film Movement scours the world’s top film festivals each year, including Cannes, Sundance, Toronto, and New York, to select the best films from among thousands of qualified entries. Selections are approved by a panel of curators who come from prestigious film institutions such as the Lincoln Center, the American Film Institute, and Roger Ebert’s Overlooked Film Festival.

All titles are released into libraries at the same time as movie theaters nationwide. All are on DVD, and come in sturdy shelf-ready packaging.

Recorded Books and Film Movement grant subscribing libraries public performance rights that allow the library a one-time showing of the movie in the library. The library receives free posters, booklets and a publicity kit with each film.

www.recordedbooks.com

Display Library Events on a Kiosk in the Lobby

EventKeeper is now offering a new feature—events entered into a library’s EventKeeper calendar can be displayed on a scrolling kiosk in the lobby.

EventKeeper calendars are in use by libraries across the nation. Through simple online forms, EventKeeper clients keep their event listings up-to-date without downloading software or bothering the Webmaster.

Now those same event listings can be available in the lobby of the library. The kiosk mode is highly configurable; the library can manage both the content and presentation of the display. Specify headers and footers, choose a keyword for the display (e.g. children’s events only), and select the number of days to include in the event listing. The scrolling can be configured to ensure the event presentation runs at the appropriate speed and refresh rate. The kiosk event listing can be accessed from any Web-enabled PC, or a full-size kiosk in a library’s lobby and can be used to promote events and guide patrons to the event locations.

The standard subscription fee for EventKeeper includes the Kiosk mode, along with many other features.

www.eventkeeper.com

Libris DESIGN—Library Facility Planning Software at Your Fingertips

Libris DESIGN is a specialized software system that incorporates years of library facility planning expertise into a database designed to help library planners produce high quality building programs and project cost estimates for new, remodeled or expanded public library facilities.

Library and design professionals need not reinvent the wheel each time they write a building program because Libris DESIGN includes ready-to-go generic library models. Users select a model based on the size and type of library they are planning and then modify it to meet the requirements of their own specific community, needs assessment and library plan of service. Users can keep, add or delete various library departments and divisions, as well as more than 400 pre-named library spaces nested within each division.

Users retrieve information from the database by selecting from fifty pre-formatted reports. Multiple reports are formatted into a final building program.

A Microsoft Access database, Libris DESIGN features user-friendly screens that are intuitive and easy to use. It also offers on-screen help throughout the entire program.

The database may be downloaded for free from the Libris DESIGN Web site, but training is required to fully benefit from all aspects of the software. The training covers not only effective use of the database, but also space planning concepts, phases of a building project, conducting a community needs assessment, cost estimating and project budgeting.

www.librisdesign.org

Columbia Granger’s Poetry Database Now Available on EBSCOhost

For an entire century, Granger’s has been the definitive source in English for locating anthologized poems on library shelves. Currently in its twelfth edition, the Columbia Granger’s Poetry Database is now available via EBSCOhost.

Columbia Granger’s Poetry Database contains works of poetry found in anthologies, and volumes of collected works and selected works for individual poets. More than 400,000 poem citations and more than 50,000 full-text poems are included in the database. Also included is bibliographic information for more than 1,800 anthologies, more than 1,100 commentaries and approximately 500 comprehensive biographies. A glossary is also provided in the Granger’s database, giving users detailed definitions for almost 200 poetry specific terms.

In addition to traditional CustomLink capabilities of EBSCOhost, hyperlinks exist in the database throughout the commentaries, biographies, and poem full text. Users can easily maneuver from poems to relevant commentary or detailed author biographies when appropriate. Subscribers to both EBSCO’s MagillOnLiterature Plus and Columbia Granger’s Poetry Database...
E*vanced Solutions Offers
Web-Based Tools to Help
Manage Library Meeting Rooms
and Events

E*vanced Solutions announced the availability of version 3.0 of its Library Management Suite. The Library Management Suite is comprised of E*vents (Event Management and Registration), E*room-reserve (Public Meeting Room Management and Reservations), and E*notify (Event and New Item Notification). Each component, though available separately, integrates with the other components to offer a high level of automation and reduce redundant work.

Version 3.0 offers new features such as: easy color and theme control, attendance capture, reports and statistics, attendee searches, better navigation tools, room capacity checking, automatic e-mail reminders, and limited patron authentication.

GIS Information Systems
Introduces Wireless Access Manager for Libraries

GIS Information Systems is introducing Wireless Access Manager (WAM) to help libraries control access to their wireless networks. WAM is a complete hardware and software package that GIS configures for libraries to install on a PC. The WAM software interfaces the hardware to GIS’ Polaris integrated library system and also can work with any integrated library system that supports SIP2.

With WAM, libraries can provide their patrons with access to their wireless network without overloading their system. Library patrons with laptops or handholds equipped with wireless cards can access the library’s wireless network by using their library cards for authentication. Designed to help libraries enhance service to their registered borrowers, WAM also includes the flexibility to accommodate business travelers and other occasional users through the creation of a “guest account.”

With a built-in Security Firewall, WAM also prevents unwanted Internet intruders from accessing the library’s network. For statistical purposes, WAM generates reports so libraries can monitor the number of patrons using their network.

Thomson Gale Becomes Exclusive Distributor of the Corbis Education Program

Thomson Gale and Corbis, announced an exclusive deal to distribute the Corbis Images for Education product in the United States and Canada.

Corbis will make Images for Education available to library patrons, students and faculty at K–12 schools, higher education institutions, and public libraries, for educational purposes, with Thomson Gale as the exclusive distributor. Corbis will continue to sell its Design Collection to art and graphic design-oriented schools and colleges.

This archive contains approximately 400,000 images from Corbis — vast image collections, including over 200,000 images from the renowned Bettmann Archive, 10,000 images from its Fine Art Collection, and tens of thousands of images from its nature, science, space, and various commercial stock collections. This results in an archive that contains images that cover a
Dynix Announces RefTracker as Reference Module for Horizon 7.3

Dynix has announced a strategic partnership with Altarama Systems and Services that will make Altarama’s reference management system RefTracker available to Dynix ILS and Horizon customers.

Through this partnership, Dynix will offer an online reference solution to libraries by adding a direct link to RefTracker through Horizon Information Portal, giving librarians the ability to ask and answer questions in a more timely manner.

With RefTracker, Dynix libraries will be able to manage all of the requests coming into their library, automatically routing them to the most appropriate staff member to ensure they are addressed quickly. RefTracker prevents questions from being answered twice and ensures previous search strategies and developed answers can be shared through the use of a knowledge database that can be searched directly by clients for instant answers.

In addition, RefTracker collects comprehensive statistics. The product also provides a comprehensive Ask-a-Librarian interface that allows expansion of a library’s reference service beyond its walls, providing service to remote users and branches that do not have on-site reference personnel.

A scaled pricing structure makes RefTracker affordable for the smallest of libraries, but the product’s functionality is sophisticated enough to meet the needs of the largest consortium.

100 Words Every High School Freshman Should Know

Building on the success of the popular 100 Words Every High School Graduate Should Know, the editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries introduced a new list of words geared toward the reading level expected of high school freshmen. 100 Words Every High School Freshman Should Know presents a wide range of words that successful middle school graduates should have already learned in their coursework and that nearly every freshman will encounter over the course of the school year. The words and definitions are taken from The American Heritage Student Dictionary. The dictionary definitions are supported by example sentences and by quotations from books read by students in middle school.

Dr. Disc Company Offers Disc Repair Service to Libraries

Dr. Disc Company is now offering its disc repair services to libraries. Libraries can use Dr. Disc’s Catalog Maintenance Program to restore their digital media to circulation for as little as $20 a month. The library selects the annual maintenance program that best fits its needs by determining the average number of discs that are taken out of circulation each month due to scratches. Dr. Disc provides the number of mailers needed for the selected level of monthly usage. Then whenever a disc is scratched, the library places it in a mailer and sends it off to Dr. Disc where it will be professionally repaired and then sent back to the library. Dr. Disc Company guarantees its results.

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