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The Sky is Not Falling on the Talking Books Program

Thank you for publishing the Perspectives column on talking books (“That All May Read,” Public Libraries, March/April 2005). Each essay offers a unique perspective on the future development of the talking book service in the United States, and I’m sure that many public librarians will find these insights helpful in sorting out the various views on this topic.

I must point out, however, some serious flaws in the essay by Jim Scheppke (“The End of Talking Books?”), which predicts that the talking book service may come to an end if the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) does not manage to get the new digital format ready for distribution by the end of 2006 because he fears the use of cassettes will drive away prospective readers. There are many reasons why this will not happen.

First, Scheppke’s doomsday forecast is partly based on the use of eligibility estimates from a study done by the American Foundation for the Blind in 1979. That study, while a model for its time, is now outdated and unreliable. More recent studies on the percentage of Americans with activity limitations and disabling conditions indicate that the rate of disability has dropped significantly in recent years. For example, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of noninstitutionalized Americans with a limitation that affects daily living activities has dropped from 13.3 percent in 1997 to 12.4 percent in 2002.1

Note that the decline has been greatest among the demographic groups that most heavily use NLS services—people between the ages of 65 and 74 (from 30 percent in 1997 to 25.2 percent in 2002), and those who are over the age of 75 (from 50.2 percent in 1997 to 45.1 percent in 2002). While these declines in the rate of disability are for all people with activity limitations, those eligible for talking books (people with visual, physical, or reading disabilities that prevent or impede the use of reading materials in standard print) are a subset of this population. In just the past few years, there has been explosive growth in the number of people who can benefit from new medical procedures, such as improved laser surgery techniques and cataract removal, so the percentage of Americans with visual impairments has slowly but steadily declined as a result.

Second, as pointed out in Susan E. Randolph’s excellent article in the same issue (“The Promise of the Great American Wealth Transfer for Public Libraries”), there was a dip in the birth rate between 1926 and 1936, so the population of people who are 75 years of age will not grow as quickly between 2001 and 2011. This will be partially offset, however, by improvements in medical care, which have increased the likelihood of Americans living beyond age seventy-five. Still, the decline in the birth rate during the Depression helped lower the number of people who are now eligible for talking books.

Third, a close examination of the number of people receiving NLS services reveals that the service population has not dropped as much as Scheppke’s chart implies. The total number of U.S. residents receiving services from NLS has indeed declined in recent years (from 554,719 in 1997 to 476,663 in 2002, a drop of 14.1 percent). But NLS counts each customer by format, so a person who reads both Braille and cassette materials is counted twice, and during the time period in question, NLS was phasing out the production of materials on records. For example, the number of individual disc readers declined from nearly 97,000 in 1997 to just over 26,000 in 2002 (a dramatic reduction of 73 percent). Since the last disc magazines were converted to

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In my last Editor’s Note, I addressed issues of technology as they are experienced by “pre-Internet-trained” librarians. This got me thinking about other generational issues in the library workplace. At the 2005 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston, the PLA Board participated in a training session conducted by Glenn Tecker of Tecker Consultants (TC) (www.tecker.com). In a digression from his main agenda, Tecker addressed generational issues as they relate to organization membership. After the workshop, I approached Tecker, and he agreed to share his PowerPoint presentation on this topic. What follows is my interpretation of the highlights of that information as it relates to librarians (some of the language used here is taken directly from TC materials).

To pick up where I left off on the theme of technology, Tecker defines the Millennial Generation (those born between 1983 and 1993) as “the digital generation.” Raised on “edutainment,” this generation is accustomed to multitasking and has a virtual competency that is unmatched by previous generations. Contrary to the stereotypes about this generation, they also tend to have a high degree of social competency and to seek a practical morality in the workplace.

Focusing on this generation as the future membership of associations, Tecker anticipates the following expectations related to technology:

- Members will want their association to use technology to identify and anticipate their needs—making valuable offers to them before they even know to ask for them. (This is what Jenny Levine refers to as the “Shifted Librarian” [www.theshiftedlibrarian.com].)
- Members will want their association to use technology to give them instant, easy access to useful knowledge, programs, and services—at the moment and in the way they want it. (This is why the ALA and PLA Web sites need to be intuitive and user-friendly.)
- Members will want their associations to use the technology to enable them to actively participate in the work and decision-making of the association, without having to travel or be in a particular place at a particular time. (PLA is already beginning to address this with its Weblog [www.plablog.org], which relies on conference attendees to report activities to the wider membership in near–real–time.)
- Members will want their association to use technology to create a sense of community that fosters emotional attachment and connection. (This will ultimately determine whether younger members of our profession feel like they are a welcome part of the association.)

As we wring our hands about the “graying of the profession” in librarianship, we need to ask ourselves if we are a welcoming community to young librarians and library workers. Tecker suggests the following reasons why it is difficult to attract younger members to associations:

1. Programs are not relevant enough for younger members.
2. Programs are not interactive or hands-on.
3. It takes too long to get involved.
4. Leadership opportunities are not accessible.
5. Associations are not open to new ideas.
6. Associations are not welcoming to new members.

As a thirty-six-year-old librarian, I am still amongst the youngest members attending ALA and PLA conferences. After twelve years in the profession, I still feel that many of the points made in Tecker’s list are true about librarianship. Rather than being embraced by veteran librarians and establishing their roles in traditional professional organizations, younger librarians appear to be forming their own online networks in the form of blogs and online newsletters that allow them to be active in the profession without having to deal with the frustrations of breaking into what can seem like an already established and unwelcoming community.

I believe this perception may be based on a misunderstanding of work styles that is influenced, at least in part, by generational issues. A summary of secondary research conducted by TC partner Pat Walker-Hickman and Robin Wedewer, president of Wedewer Research (www.wedewergroup.com) and TC senior associate, indicates that “the events and conditions each of us experiences during our formative years influence who we are and how we see the world” (emphasis in original).

In Rocking the Ages: The Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing (Harperbusiness, 1997), J. Walker Smith and Ann S. Clurman discuss generational myopia, which occurs when an older generation judges the younger one by its own values, and clique maintenance, or the compulsion of one generation to bolster its own self-image by disparaging the next one. These are issues that librarians need to take seriously if we hope to find replacements for the many library workers who plan to retire within the next couple of decades.

Figure 1 provides a brief overview of characteristics of the generations that are alive today. Since most librarians fall into the Baby Boomer or Silent Generations (and are therefore familiar with their influences and attitudes), my discussion will focus on the Gen-Xers, and Millennials (the generations that we primarily hope to target in bringing new librarians into the profession).

Raised in a culture of instant results, Gen-Xers and Millennials tend to expect immediacy. Gen-Xers, in particular, see a price in the Boomer lifestyle that they are unwilling to pay and are more focused on the here and now than in planning for the long term. They tend to be innovative, which makes them good entrepreneurs. But they also expect to balance their jobs with a life outside of work. Gen-Xers tend to be more peer-focused than previous generations and look for a community of like-minded friends in the workplace.

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three interesting publications continue to resonate with me as I ponder how we will get our public libraries to places that not everyone agrees we should be headed. The 2003 OCLC Environmental Scan: Pattern Recognition was widely disseminated in early 2004 and has prompted discussions at many library conferences and meetings. It rests implicitly within the ruminations and conclusions of The Public Library Service in 2015, “a discussion paper” that is the outcome of a seminar in Bedford, U.K. in 2004. This interesting and provocative paper is attributed to The Futures Group, a “group of middle managers in public libraries who have come together under the auspices of The Laser Foundation to discuss issues relating to the future of the public library sector.”

A third article, hot off the press, comes from the January–March 2005 OCLC Newsletter with a focus on the differing worlds of the “gamer” and “boomer” generations, along with some thoughts about what these differences might mean to the future of library services and the way we work with each other.

I first had an opportunity to review OCLC’s 2003 Environmental Scan when serving on the center’s Advisory Committee on Public Libraries. While some have suggested that there was no groundbreaking discovery in the publication, most have agreed that the Environmental Scan does the best job in recent years of bringing together discussion and analysis of many converging issues that are affecting our libraries. Although the stated purpose of the study is “the identification and description of issues and trends that are impacting and will impact OCLC, libraries, museums, archives and other allied organizations, positively and negatively,” in fact, the Environmental Scan can also be read as a synthesis of many topics of PLA-sponsored discussions, articles, and programs of the past few years. On its release, I found it to be a most welcome articulation of many trends affecting libraries, and it continues to provoke discussions about the future of library services, budgets, technology, and culture clashes among our patrons and ourselves. When working on my library district’s new 2005–2008 Strategic Plan, we found the report so useful that I asked our planning consultants (former PLA presidents Ron Dubberly and June Garcia) to lead discussions with our board and planning committee on the manner in which many of the issues identified in the report would likely affect our service and organizational planning.

June, in turn, sent me a tantalizing link to a “little paper” written by a group of middle managers in the United Kingdom and published under the auspices of The Laser Foundation. Many of us think that June has airline wings embedded in her physiology, with the benefit of bringing informed observations to those of us at home about innovative and inspiring efforts to advance public librarianship around the world. So when one receives an e-mail from her with a note that “you might want to check this out,” odds are it will be a rewarding tip. An enticing title from The Futures Group was already a tease, and the added knowledge that this was a group of self-described “mainly young middle managers” that was resourceful enough to find a respectable forum for the publication of their viewpoints was too good to pass up.

Wherever We’re Headed, Are We Going Together?

Dan Walters

The Public Library Service in 2015 does not disappoint. This little paper reiterates many of the themes established in the Environmental Scan and referentially includes a hyperlink to the OCLC document. But The Public Library Service in 2015 focuses on public libraries exclusively rather than the broad swath of institutions in the sights of the OCLC study. The paper posits observations on broad public library issues in the U.K. amid troubling declines in institutional performance metrics. It cites new service challenges to populations with diverging income and social characteristics in the midst of problems with governance and declining funding, which will continue to dog the ability of public library advocates to advance their favored institution. You will find concurrence with the Environmental Scan in the OCLC document.

“The Big Bang!” extends the discussion on generational culture clashes that is also a theme in the Environmental Scan. This article more specifically addresses the “gaming” generation than the Environmental Scan, which discusses the broader identification of multi-generational issues affecting both library staffing and the challenges to developing new services that must work for all our patrons. The article suggests that “gamers” comprise the generation “born after 1970 and raised on video games, (which) is about four to five years away from dominating society.” John C. Beck, cited in the article as senior research fellow at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg Center for the Digital Future, is the source of observations that contrast the gamers with the “boomers,” an interesting take on culture clashes in disputes that may be fermenting in our peaceful libraries over whether to initiate new organizational and service initiatives that address gamer preferences.

If gamers are motivated and persistent from repeated defeats at the hands of ones-and-zeros, as well as confident and sociable through their affinity with repeated gaming skirmishes and involvement in Web-based interactive communities, Beck argues that boomers, by contrast, are career-driven, materialistic, and skeptical. How are we all going to get along and bring mutuality to assessing new approaches to public library services? We must identify solutions within our management structures to provide a mix of services for these critical generations in order to succeed in our changing organizational and social environments.

We have plenty to do as we look down the road ahead. It is impossible to understate the impact of the tensions that rise to the surface some days at the circ desk—or any service desk—over complaints about cell phones, noisy children, graphic novels, continued on page 193
cassette in 2000, the national count of total users for the talking book program naturally experienced a large decline in that year, as many magazine readers went from using two audio formats (cassette and disc) to one. Considering the cassette readership only, the number of Americans using NLS cassette materials went from 142,365 in 1997 to 132,038 in 2002, a decline of only 2.3 percent, which is hardly surprising given the decline in disability rates during those years.

So it is not the cassette format that is holding back growth in the NLS readership. Furthermore, CDs have many problems as a distribution medium for talking books, not the least of which is that this technology will almost certainly be obsolete by 2010, while flash memory is more likely to become the medium of choice for most users. Sure, public library programs will continue to become more accessible to people with disabilities, as the law requires, and we applaud this development. But of the six books that Susanne Bjorner mentioned in her wonderful essay in the same Perspectives column (“High Marks, but Changing Needs”), only one of them is widely available on CD. You won’t find The French Lieutenant’s Woman, Call of the Wild, Gambit, The Barber of Seville/Marriage of Figaro, or God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater available as books on CD in the catalog of the Chicago Public Library (CPL) (www.chipublib.org), or most other public libraries in this country for that matter, but maybe they are available in the Netherlands. Several of these titles are not offered by CPL in large print, either, but all of them are currently available through the Talking Book program.

I should also mention that there are very few magazines currently available in commercial audiobook format and a dearth of specialized materials such as foreign language books, local history, and books on disability, to name just a few reading categories that are frequently requested by our talking book readers.

Finally, Scheppke’s worry that “sharp-penciled budget analysts” may declare talking books a “dying program” is not likely where competent administrators using real data are in charge of the service. Here in Florida, we have had steady budget increases for the past several years, partly because our loans have continued to grow while readership has declined only slightly. Our analysts have thoroughly reviewed the talking book program and found it to be a bargain, especially when contrasted with general public library costs per registered borrower.

NLS has an excellent plan for a smooth transition to the next generation of talking books, developed after years of work in consultation with all stakeholders, including Scheppke. I am confident that they will ignore the cries from some quarters that the “sky is falling,” and will hold fast to the orderly implementation of their plan, to the benefit of all concerned.—Michael G. Gunde, Chief, Bureau of Braille and Talking Book Library Services, Division of Blind Services, Florida Department of Education Reference

Reference


The Author Responds

Mike Gunde is right that I should have used cassette program readership statistics, rather than total readership, in my article. As several colleagues (including Gunde) have pointed out to me recently, total readership actually counts the same person twice, or even three times, and is not a reliable statistic. But using cassette program readership doesn’t change the picture. What Gunde fails to note is that cassette program readers dropped by nearly 2 percent between 2002 and 2003, and that the number of cassette readers in 2003 (424,159) was the lowest number since 1995. I still say, this is evidence that users and potential users are turning away from the antiquated cassette technology and from our talking book programs.

There is no evidence that CDs will become obsolete in five years, as Gunde contends. As my article points out, MP3 and other new advanced digital audio formats are about to become standard equipment in car CD players, and CD audiobooks are going to be more popular than ever for as long as most cars have CD players. Eventually, downloadable audiobooks will probably overtake CDs, but not in the near term. There is no evidence for Gunde’s contention that removable flash memory cartridges holding audiobooks will become “the medium of choice.” This most certainly will not happen, which means that for the first time in the history of the NLS program, the NLS player will only be able to play NLS books, something I doubt most users will be happy about.

The brilliant cofounder and former CEO of Intel, Andy Grove, is famous for his belief that in business, and especially in the technology and information business, “only the paranoid survive.” I think this is the best mantra for librarians in the twenty-first century, and especially for those of us in the talking book business. We in Oregon are determined to meet the needs of all of our customers and potential customers, regardless of whether NLS delivers a good product in 2008 or not. We will look at other suppliers of audiobooks and players, if we have to. We are already doing this with our Unabridged pilot project (www.unabridged.info). We intend to be customer-driven, not supplier-driven, and we would advise Gunde and others to adopt our business strategy.—Jim Scheppke, Librarian, Oregon State Library, Salem
The digital generation tends to see virtual space as a comfortable alternative to live communication. They lead highly programmed lives and are accustomed to multitasking. Millennials are also pragmatic and tend to question everything, and like the generation ahead of them, they work well with their peers.

In order to create a more welcoming work environment for younger librarians, we need to make sure that our libraries are able to offer the things that they are looking for in a job (and in life). We also need to recognize that the digital generation is “reverse mentoring” the preceding generations in terms of lifestyle, work processes, and expectations.

Younger generations will join associations not because they have to, but because they really want to. They seek life challenges that match their skills and interests. They are also looking to contribute to something greater than what individuals can accomplish alone, as well as human connections that make work fun.

Younger generations:

■ want to be part of a highly motivated team of committed people;
■ thrive where they can be who they are and express themselves;
■ want to work closely with and learn from colleagues they respect;
■ want to socialize and form friendships; and
■ set goals big enough to engage their imagination.

Experienced librarians can help younger generations feel more at home in the workplace by avoiding stereotyping and getting to know younger librarians as individuals. They should also avoid micromanaging; Xers and Millennials tend to want to do things on their own, at their own pace. Younger generations won’t expect to “pay their dues” as previous generations may have. They anticipate more opportunities, faster than their predecessors.

Acknowledging that different generations have different work styles and attitudes is the first step in creating a more harmonious work environment for people of different ages. However, generational differences shouldn’t be viewed as barriers. We can seek common bonds and work together to understand value differences. Providing autonomy balanced by camaraderie, fun, and access to peers will make libraries more attractive to younger generations and more rewarding for all of us.
I don't know of a single public library that doesn't have a hard time bringing middle and high schoolers into the library, nor do I know of a single public library that wouldn't want to do a better job at providing services for this age group. So in addition to trying to bring teens into the library, let's also bring the library to the teens. Enter stage left: Instant Messaging Reference (IMR).

After attending a few different conference presentations about the up-and-coming topic of IMR in public libraries, I was inspired to go back to my library (Marin County [Calif.] Free Library) and see if our staff and patrons would be interested in such a service. And boy, were they! After a brief demonstration of instant messaging (IM) at our reference librarians' meeting, along with some statistics about instant messaging from recent polls, our librarians were sold on the idea of providing this service and targeting it to our teen population. Many of our teen patrons use IM, both at home and in the library. The service definitely had a potential audience.

A team of six librarians interested in staffing the service was formed, and together we hammered out all of the details:

- **The scope of the service:** all patrons regardless of location, for all questions except detailed circulation inquiries, specific answers to health, legal, or homework questions, referrals to commercial services, or personal opinions.
- **Scheduling:** 3–5 P.M., Monday–Friday, plus extra times when I (the e-services librarian) am at my desk.
- **Aggregator software & IM services:** we decided on Trillian, and use it to aggregate three services—AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, and MSN Messenger.
- **Needed training and practice:** simple informal practice before the launch.
- **A question-answering procedure:** basic reference interview methods, with the additions of focusing on online resources, some patron privacy steps, and some general guidelines as to the number and duration of questions.
- **Screen names:** MarinLibrary and MarinLibrary@hotmail.com
- **Patron privacy issues:** discarding logs or transcripts of IM sessions, leaving patrons off our Buddy List, and removing patrons from the Recent Buddies list.

- **Statistics to keep:** a simple monthly tally of questions.
- **Script templates to use:** general reference scripts, referral scripts to our other services, and creative ways to deal with inappropriate questions or language.
- **Publicizing the service:** in as many ways and in as many places of which we could think.

One of the biggest challenges was to justify offering both IMR and our statewide Web-based chat reference (AskNow). There are significant differences between the two services, and we have made the case that they successfully complement each other. IMR connects patrons with local librarians, is often less formal than other types of reference, utilizes software many teens and tweens already have, and the software itself is easy to download and does not have strict system requirements. However, IMR is only available during limited hours, Monday through Friday. Our Web-based chat reference is available 24/7 (a huge plus) and doesn’t require any special software. However, it connects patrons with librarians who could be anywhere in the U.S. and has rather strict system requirements that sometimes cause system or software crashes and bad reference experiences for the patrons. The short story is this: if we could offer IMR 24/7, we would. But we can’t. Instead we rely on AskNow to fill in the time gaps, even though sometimes the program isn’t the most reliable and doesn’t offer a connection with the local community.

With a month of lead time before our launch, we configured our workstations and software to be uniform for all librarians staffing the service. We let all of our staff know that it was coming, including circulation, reference, and technical staff. It was very important to involve all staff in this new service, not only because they were all potential points of contact for our users (and could thereby plug this excellent new service to them), but because patrons will ask questions of anyone with a name tag.

Because the success of any service has a lot to do with how it is marketed, we publicized our IMR service in all the ways we could imagine. Press releases were sent to all local newspapers, and as a result our county’s newspaper (the Marin Independent Journal) featured an article about our IMR service on the front page of its local section. Flyers with screen name tear-off slips and business cards with our screen names were sent to our eleven branches for posting and distribution. Letters were sent to all area middle schools and high schools (addressed to their librarians or media specialists) notifying them of the new service and asking them to let their students know about it. All other local public libraries were notified of the new service as well. Blurbss about the new service were included on the library’s blog, e-newsletter, and homepage. Links to our IMR service appear on our Web site, including the teen section.

On January 3, 2005, the Marin County Free Library began offering IMR service. In the first month of service, we answered 63 questions via IMR. In the second month, we answered 103 questions. Every month since then has seen a similar increase. Many, if not most, of the questions we receive are homework-related, though there were definitely some questions coming from adults and, more specifically, local businesspeople. Some of the questions we’ve received include:

- What does QUASAR stand for?
- I need to find articles on pros and cons of burning fossil fuels.
- Where can I get information on marketing my small business?
I need literary criticism articles about Anne Rice’s books.

- How much does it cost to advertise in the local newspaper?
- What do the colors in the Iranian flag stand for?

We have also received some circulation inquiries, but most questions so far have been of the traditional reference variety.

To date, we have received dozens of e-mails, IMs, and in-person thanks for offering this service. The gratitude has come not only from our targeted group of middle and high school students, but from school librarians, parents, teachers, and adult patrons as well.

The reaction from the librarians who staff the service has been enthusiastic. Elmer Jan, head of reference at the Civic Center branch and one of our IM librarians, says of IMing, “The informal style of IM communication helps to make the exchange very friendly. As IM is a mode of communication favored by teens, this is a great way to reach out to a segment of our patron base that otherwise might not have thought of the library as a resource.”

IM is much different from traditional forms of reference, which includes e-mail. Julie Magnus, head of reference at the Corte Madera branch and one of our IM librarians, says “IM reference can be intense, especially when you’re gathering data from electronic resources and juggling more than one session at a time. I would like to respond more quickly, and the informal dialogue should make that easier once I get a bit more experience.”

As with any new technology, it takes some time to feel comfortable with it. We’re finding that IM patrons present some unique demands, particularly their desire for quick (almost instantaneous) answers. But we’re also finding that with a quick explanation of what we’re doing, the steps of our research process, and frequent “still searching” messages, patrons will be patient.

IMR offers us one more way to provide quality reference service to our online patrons. Says Jan, “I like being able to copy and paste URLs directly into the IM interface so the patron can go directly to a Web-based resource to get information that I’ve had the opportunity to evaluate as reliable and accurate.”

Patrons are being directed to librarian-selected and evaluated online resources, instead of just going to Google and choosing the first result. Not only does this result in patrons getting better information, but illustrates once again that the vital role librarians play in providing appropriate information to patrons is a function that search engines cannot fulfill. If we, as librarians, are online where our patrons are, we can guide them through the great information wilderness that is the Internet.

Sarah Houghton is the e-Services librarian at the Marin County (Calif.) Free Library; shoughton@co.marin.ca.us. She is currently reading All Passion Spent by Vita Sackville-West, War Trash by Ha Jin, and Learn to Relax by Mike George.

References
3. Jan, e-mail correspondence.

Daniel L. Walters is Executive Director of the Las Vegas–Clark County (N.V.) Library District, 833 Las Vegas Blvd. N., Las Vegas, NV 89101; Waltersd@lvclld.org. He recommends his most recent reads: Austerlitz and The Emigrants, both by W. G. Sebald; No Country For Old Men, by Cormac McCarthy; and The Last Crossing by Guy Vanderhaeghe. He is currently reading Sea of Glory by Nathaniel Philbrick.
Public Library and Public Schools Collaborate to Increase Student Achievement

Harford County (Mass.) Public Library recently conducted a needs assessment survey with Harford County Public Schools. The results will serve as a blueprint for strengthening the library’s connection to the county schools by helping the library to plan future library programs and services.

Funded by a federal LSTA grant, the survey was administered to all teachers, administrators, media specialists, and district-level content area supervisors in the Harford County Public School system (K–12), a total of 2,693 potential respondents. An overwhelming 87 percent of this group completed the survey. Each public school in the county was represented in the survey, and nineteen county schools boasted 100 percent staff participation.

School personnel identified ways the library can assist them in meeting school system goals. The results will also enable Harford County Public Library to more directly support schools in their efforts to comply with No Child Left Behind legislation by ensuring that all of Harford County’s children receive a high-quality education.

Survey results clearly indicated that school personnel perceived the services of the library to be helpful to themselves as well as to the parents and students in their communities. The results of the needs assessment were shared with local school and library administrators.

Harford County Public Library plans to offer its experience in implementing a research-based needs assessment to other library systems throughout the country. Full results of the Harford County Public Library’s needs assessment can be obtained by contacting Anne Wagner, assistant marketing manager at (410) 273-5601, ext. 222 or by accessing the Harford County Public Library’s Web site (www.hcplonline.info).

Shop for the Library

Following a two-year test at the Woodland (Calif.) Public Library, an online fundraising program called Shop for the Library is now available at no charge for use by any U.S. public library. Friends of the Library groups and library foundations may also participate.

Every purchase initiated through the Shop for the Library Web site (www.shopforthelibrary.net) generates a commission for the library of the user’s choice. The program features more than seven hundred online merchants, including big name retailers such as Target, Macy’s, Gap, and Circuit City.

The benefits of fundraising through Shop for the Library are:

- no special contribution required of library users—they simply support the library through their everyday online purchasing;
- easy-to-use—an optional one-time software download ensures that every purchase from a participating merchant generates a commission for the library, without users needing to remember to return to the Shop for the Library Web site.

Participating libraries can find templates for a variety of promotional materials via the “About” link at the bottom of the Shop for the Library home page.

Shop for the Library is a joint venture of i2i Communications and software developer TopMoxie. For more information, visit www.shopforthelibrary.net or see this issue’s Bringing in the Money column.

Libraries for the Blind Launch Digital Audiobook Service

State libraries for the blind in Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, New Hampshire, and Oregon, along with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), part of the Library of Congress, have partnered to launch an innovative digital audiobook service for visually impaired users.

Unabridged (www.unabridged.info) enables blind patrons to check out and download digital spoken-word audiobooks directly to their computers. The digital audiobooks can then be played back on a PC, transferred to a portable MP3 playback device, or burned onto CDs.

In addition to NLS, member libraries include Colorado Talking Book Library, Delaware Library for the Blind...

The first year of the program will serve as the pilot phase, with a limited number of users in each participating state. Early responses from librarians and patrons have been very positive. During the first month of the service use of the collection has been brisk, and reports of technical problems have been sparse. Lori Bell, director of the Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center, noted, “I am very excited about this project. Our readers are eager to try digital audiobooks. Through Unabridged they can browse, select a book and download it directly to their computers.”

Unabridged is powered by the new digital audiobook system from OverDrive (www.overdrive.com). The content is delivered as encrypted Windows Media Audio (WMA) files applying Digital Rights Management service (DRM). Playback on a personal computer is accomplished using the new OverDrive Media Console (OMC) software. OMC builds on the existing features of Windows Media Player to offer key functionalities useful to digital audiobooks users, such as MediaMarkers, which allow nonlinear navigation, bookmarks, and the ability to skip back fifteen seconds in the digital audiobook. OMC also enables variable speed playback, an exciting new feature for a mainstream digital audiobook system designed for the general consumer market. The OMC offers enhanced accessibility and general usability for blind and visually impaired readers.

For more information, contact Tom Peters at (816) 228-6406 or write tpeters@tapinformation.com.

Low-Vision Technology Center Available, Thanks to Eagle Scout

The Bellingham (Mass.) Public Library is the grateful recipient of the efforts of an amazing young man, Bobby Dickinson, a member of Boy Scout Troop 14. The seventeen-year-old Bellingham resident was born with a congenital eye disease called Stargardt’s, a juvenile form of macular degeneration. Dickinson has been losing his eyesight since he was twelve and has been fortunate to have access to the latest technology both in school and at home.

When deciding on an Eagle Scout project, Dickinson wondered if there was a way to make low-vision technology available to people of all ages in a public venue. It didn’t take him long to enlist the help of Susan Peterson, past-director of the Bellingham Public Library, area Lions Clubs, and the Bellingham Disabilities Commission. He received the funding for not one, but two, Telesensory cameras for enlarging any type of reading material. Local Lions Clubs contributed the major portion necessary to purchase two Atlas 610 Telesensory cameras. His fellow Boy Scouts donated their own Scout Bucks in return for service hours and earned additional funds through bottle-and-can drives for two twenty-inch Toshiba monitors. Jane Orenstein, a Whitinsville optometrist offered a dome magnifier. AP (www.ai2squared.com) donated its software, Big Shot, which greatly magnifies type on a library computer screen. Charlotte Rabbitt, the current director of the Bellingham Public Library, set aside space in the reference room and arranged for the installation of a new computer, complete with Internet access and word-processing software.

Dickinson hopes that students and adults with low vision will come to know the Vision Center at the Bellingham Public Library Vision Center.

Anonymous Sources Needed!

The PLA Confidentiality Committee is writing an article on the impact of the PATRIOT Act on public libraries. We would like to hear your experiences . . . anonymously, of course.

If you were approached by a law enforcement agency after September 11, 2001, please tell us about it. No names or library names will be used.

We are preparing an article for publication in Public Libraries.

Please e-mail Peg Bradshaw, pbradsha@wrl.org; Alan Harkness, aharkness@gwinnettpl.org; or Cathy O’Connell, oconnell@bocalibrary.org
Do Internet Filters Infringe upon Access to Material in Libraries?

Hampton (Skip) Auld

In September 2004, the Ohio Library Council (OLC) staged a debate at its annual conference between Jim Neal, university librarian at Columbia University, and myself. OLC invited me to speak because of an article I wrote on Internet filters. The resolution we debated was:

A basic and time-honored value of the American public library has been open access to material. Filtering materials on the Internet goes against this premise. Therefore, Internet access at the public library should be open and equal for all.\(^1\)

For his side of the debate, Jim used a great deal of information from former American Library Association (ALA) president Nancy Kranich’s recent article on Internet filters.\(^2\) For this Perspectives column, Kranich graciously agreed to provide her perspective in this column. For the purpose of this column, we switch the usual order of debate and place first my negative response to one premise of the debate resolution. Then Kranich responds with her affirmative response to the resolution. After these opening statements, we continued the debate and commentary on these issues.


I served as ALA councilor-at-large in 2003–2004 and as a member of the PLA board of directors in 2000–2001. I also served as a member of intellectual freedom committees in North Carolina and Maryland in the 1980s and 1990s.

In my opening remarks, I mention PLA’s Public Library Data Service Statistical Report 2004, which included a special survey of Internet filtering with data for 2002, the year prior to the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) decision. While my comments focus on Ohio libraries, similar information is reported in Statistical Report 2004 for libraries throughout the United States and Canada.

We welcome your further perspectives, comments, and letters to the editor for publication in a later issue. We did not set out to “win a debate,” but rather we hope to elucidate various aspects of the filtering issue in public libraries. Our mutual goal is to strengthen our professional core principles and values, based on articulating our experience, observations, and analysis of these controversial ideas.

Filtering Materials on the Internet Does Not Contradict the Value of Open Access to Material

Skip Auld
Assistant Director, Chesterfield County (Va.) Public Library; AuldHM@chesterfield.gov

I agree with the first premise of the Ohio debate statement, namely that “A basic and time-honored value of the American public library has been open access to material.” I further agree with the “resolved” clause, that “Internet access at the public library should be open and equal for all.” As a matter of fact, I consider this a core personal and professional value. And I believe that public libraries, as agencies of government, should work to maintain the Internet as open and unfettered as possible. However, I do not agree that “filtering materials on the Internet goes against the value of open and equal access.”

Let me share two stories. At the Virginia Library Association’s Paraprofessional Forum in spring 2004, a frontline library worker in the Chesterfield County (Va.) Public Library, a nine-branch public library system, told this story. She said:

I’m defining pornography as everything from softcore pornography like one might see in Playboy to hardcore images like those found in a magazine like Hustler. Not lingerie or Sports Illustrated swimsuit images or art prints, artistic nudes, or sex education sites. Speaking from personal experience, before filters I saw pornography on library computers every single day, several times a day, and at every library in which I worked. I had parents approach me to complain that their children were being exposed to pornography as they walked through the library or searched for books. Since the library implemented filters, I personally have only seen pornography three times in three years. The filter has virtually eliminated pornography while allowing patrons access to all other information.\(^3\)

In the other story, Gary Deane discussed what he describes as the debacle over Internet access at the Ottawa Public Library in Ontario, Canada. He says:

The issue arose out of growing complaints from parents who claimed their children had been exposed to unwanted material in the library. There also had been a grievance by library workers who, according to their union, were being made physically ill by what they were forced to see in the name of intellectual freedom.

. . . Whatever the merit of the respective arguments, the outcome of this disagreement for many public libraries, has been a series of communications and public relations calamities for both libraries and their representative associations. What appears to the public as a misplaced idealism and a moral high-handedness on the part of many librarians on the issue of filtering and online pornography
has resulted in untold damage to professional credibility and institutional reputation.4

Think about the following questions.

■ Would you recognize pornography if you saw it?
■ Have you ever seen pornography on public library computers?
■ Have your customers ever complained to you that they saw pornography on public library computers?
■ Does your library have Internet-use policies that do not allow the viewing of pornography, or sexually explicit images, or in the language of the Supreme Court, “obscenity, child pornography, or material harmful to minors”?5
■ Does your library have Internet-use policies that state that the viewing of pornography on library computers is inappropriate?
■ If your library does not have Internet filters set to block pornography, would you like your library to add filters if you knew that they were effective and that the cost was reasonable? By “effective,” I mean that they would not significantly overblock or underblock, and you could unblock nonpornographic Web sites easily.

My arguments against the debate proposition are as follows:

1. Filtering materials on the Internet does not go against our intellectual freedom principles.
2. Filters are effective.
3. Communities, including staff and patrons, are complaining about pornography on computer screens in their public libraries.
4. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that there are circumstances in which filtering is constitutional.

Joey Rodger, the former executive director of both the Urban Libraries Council and PLA, spoke about the Internet in a recent Perspectives interview. She spoke of the idea that “technologies tend to be either incremental — things that bring incremental change, or disruptive — things that fundamentally change the playing field.” Rodger said, “I think the history of our last twenty years is that we have treated the Internet as an incremental technology and, in fact, it’s disruptive as all get-out. It’s not disruptive because it upsets us, but because it totally changes the paradigms for the distribution of information. And we did not understand it that way.”5

No longer are libraries selecting tens or hundreds of thousands of books and magazines to fill up the limited shelves in their libraries. No, a single selection decision now brings millions of selections. That decision, to provide Internet access for the community, brought untold information riches into the library. It also brought inappropriate, unwanted, and pornographic materials into the public library that had never been selected and, of course, would never have been selected. The paradigm for the distribution of information was fundamentally changed by the Internet. And we did not understand this.

The late Lester Asheim’s article comparing censorship with selection has been read by nearly every library school student of the past fifty years as one of the prime foundation blocks of our intellectual freedom heritage. He wrote the following: “The library which does not stock a book . . . which is punishable by law as pornographic will not be considered here. The real question of censorship versus selection arises when the librarian, exer-

That decision, to provide Internet access for the community, brought untold information riches into the library. It also brought inappropriate, unwanted, and pornographic materials into the public library that had never been selected and, of course, would never have been selected.

filters that, if filters can be at least partially effective in keeping pornography off public library computers where they bring their children, why would any library not use filters?

2. I contended that filters are effective. Unfortunately, much of the filtering debate of the past ten years has been over the fine points of filter effectiveness. Data from an Internet filtering survey of fiscal year 2003 has recently been published by the Public
Filtering Materials on the Internet Contradicts the Value of Open Access to Material

Nancy Kranich
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Filtering Materials on the Internet

Contradicts the Value of Open Access to Material

“Don’t think of an elephant!” says George Lakoff, the esteemed scholar and professor of linguistics, as he teaches his students in Cognitive Science 101. Every word, like elephant, evokes a frame. Unfortunately, Lakoff’s introductory students always think of elephants in this exercise, even though he tells them not to. He explains that words are defined relative to frames. And “when we negate a frame, we evoke a frame.” Like Lakoff’s students, librarians cannot avoid thinking about filters when the issue confronts them. Rather than think of filters, librarians should take Lakoff’s advice and reframe the debate, based on his basic principle of framing. “When you are arguing against the other side: Do not use their language.”

In this debate, like so many other policy discussions facing Americans today, language matters. And too often the language that librarians use reduces the discourse to the terms set by those who do not share our values. Instead, we must be unafraid and unapologetic to set the agenda based on our own value systems, using the language and frames that invoke these values. When others begin an exchange from the perspective of protecting children from pornography in the library, they invoke frames and dominate debates. Rather than accept these frames, we must understand the lesson of “don’t think of an elephant,” that attacking our opponents’ frame simply reinforces their message. “Our job,” according to Lakoff, “is to frame our own values, vision, and mission,” but most importantly “to avoid attacking theirs because, if we do, it only keeps their ideas in the forefront.”

Skip Auld begins this debate persuasively by stating that “Internet access at the public library should be open and equal for all. As a matter of fact, I consider this a core personal and professional value.” But when he sets the stage for his arguments, he asks readers to think about the following questions.

- Would you recognize pornography if you saw it?
- Have you ever seen pornography on public library computers?
- Have your customers ever complained to you that they saw pornography on public library computers?
- Does your library have Internet-use policies that do not allow the viewing of pornography, or sexually explicit images, or in the language of the Supreme Court, “obscenity, child pornography, or material harmful to minors?”

Unfortunately, Auld immediately abandons the language of his core values by framing the argument defensively. He reinforces the frame of those eager to damage the image of libraries and falls right into their trap. Even though Auld raises important concerns, he neglects to frame them from the moral perspective and values that he cherishes.

Library Data Service in PLA’s annual Statistical Report. This data includes reports by 66 out of the 251 Ohio public library systems. The data demonstrate that filters can be bypassed quickly and that there are relatively few requests to bypass filters. The data show a variety of applications of filters, from all public computers to all children’s computers and a mixed bag in between. And finally, the data demonstrate that the costs are reasonable. Certainly, the communities that decided at the local level to use filters feel the costs are worth the benefits.

3. Local communities are in the best position to decide whether filtering is a benefit and whether this benefit is worth more than the cost. Filters can be at least partially effective in keeping pornography off public library computers where parents bring their children, and they can be more effective than other methods at keeping pornography away from children.

When other methods prove inadequate to the task of enforcing policies accessing illegal or inappropriate materials on the Internet, then filters are a valuable option. If staff or patrons are complaining about pornography on computer screens, that is a matter to take very seriously. It has always been highly inappropriate to view pornography in plain view in public libraries, even when the pornography is “constitutionally protected speech,” to use the words of the ALA resolution against filtering.

4. My final argument against the debate resolution is that our profession, as represented by ALA, took many of our professional arguments against filters all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States, and we lost the argument. In the CIPA decision of June 2003, the Court ruled that there are circumstances in which filtering in public libraries is constitutional. In its ruling, the Court recognized that blocking pornography from public library computers is a “compelling government interest,” which is legal language for saying that blocking pornography is a significant interest of society.

In the long run, the prudent use of filters to block inappropriate materials on the Internet will ensure the greatest amount of freedom of speech for the greatest numbers of people. The prudent use of Internet filters will ensure the greatest amount of safety and security for children and adults who do not want to be exposed to a side of the Internet that offends them. We are at a time in American public library history when, perhaps, we can make our own professional paradigm shift. We can begin to view Internet filtering as simply another tool in our arsenal of resources and services. Our 1999 core values statement, “Libraries: An American Value,” states, “We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children’s use of the library and its resources and services.” Internet filtering is one tool we can use to help parents and guardians do just that. Using common sense in configuring the filters, we can help all our patrons, and especially parents, to do what they believe is right for their children.

Yes, “Internet access at the public library should be open and equal for all.” Our professional concern about filters should become a chapter in the history of American public libraries, a chapter about the transition of librarians as we moved through a seismic paradigm shift when the world of information changed.

Our rallying cry, that “Filters violate the First Amendment!” is a mistaken belief that has been discredited by the Supreme Court. The idea that “Filters violate the First Amendment” has been a keystone of our actions in the realm of intellectual freedom over the past decade. I believe it is time, in fact it is long past time, to retire this idea, and to give encouragement to libraries who at the local level want to use filters carefully, as tools to manage the magnificent new resource we were all given with the birth of the Internet as a popular medium of communication several years ago.
So it is time that we study Lakoff’s Framing 101 in order to learn how to take back public discourse, using language that fits our worldview. In this debate over values, we must talk about what we stand for—democratic access to information, not just what we are against—pornography. Fortunately, we can employ ALA’s recently adopted set of core values to frame an argument better suited to our profession’s principles. These values can then shape the discussion about open access and filtering to our advantage.

Showcasing Our Core Values

1. Equity of access is a value that offers us language to communicate how we provide access to information, whether or not our libraries use filters. Even though the Internet promises new opportunities for everyone to participate in the information society, many low-income, minority, non-English speaking, disabled, elderly, rural, and inner-city groups are falling behind in their ownership of computers and access to telecommunications networks. Our public libraries ensure that many of those left behind are connected. In fact, today, the public library serves as the number one point of access for those without computers at home, school, or work. And because the Internet is now the only point of access to “a wide variety of government services, educational materials, health resources, communication tools, and commercial activities,” and the sole log-on point for 10 percent of Americans, the story that libraries bridge information access gaps for disadvantaged Americans resonates loud and clear with the public. Unfortunately, when many libraries that are committed to providing equitable access and bridging the digital divide rely on federal funds, they are required to use filters that block numerous sites available to those fortunate enough to have access at home, thereby relegating their neediest citizens to second-class Internet users. Rather than defending the utility of filters, librarians are better served when they demonstrate how they are leveling the playing field for those left behind, while making sure they offer seamless means for adults to turn off filters and for children to unblock lawful sites. In this way, they communicate the value of less privileged users gaining equal access to lawful, useful materials.

2. Privacy is the value that provides assurances to users that their library will safeguard records that identify individual users and link them to search strategies or sites accessed. Users come with the reasonable expectation that libraries will protect their confidentiality when using public terminals. By explicitly telling them about our updated privacy policies and procedures, they will feel safer. Privacy screens are just one remedy that shelters users and ensures that they and their children will not accidentally witness any information or images on someone else’s computer screen. Moreover, libraries that filter need to protect user privacy when asking to view blocked sites. Such privacy practices go a long way toward comforting users, building their trust and ensuring their safety in a digital world.

3. Democracy is the core value that underscores the unique role that libraries play to ensure free and open access to information so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. We ensure that our libraries are inclusive, that no person or idea is excluded, and that individuals can make their own choices. That commitment explains why members of the ALA Council voted overwhelmingly against the use of filtering software that blocks constitutionally protected speech. Libraries that filter have a special responsibility to make sure that no one is excluded and that everyone has equal and seamless access to protected speech. This means that they must strive for transparency by explicitly informing users of their rights and choices.

4. Diversity is another important value that allows us to articulate the important role libraries play in providing a broad, diverse array of resources and services. If we are committed to attracting underserved populations to libraries, we must highlight resources offered, not items denied. Local libraries must ensure that their community’s specific needs are met and that choices offered reflect individual preferences. For libraries that filter, this means they must alert citizens of their rights, collect complaints in a neutral manner, and encourage communications with Congress and other policy makers about the impact of legislative mandates.

5. Education is yet another important value to insert into the discourse about the role of public libraries and how they ensure effective, efficient, and safe Internet use. In addition to showcasing training and information literacy programs that teach twenty-first-century skills, libraries should also link users to sites such as the Association for Library Service to Children’s Great Web Sites for Kids along with safety information, like GetNetWise. With or without the use of filters, the best protection that libraries can employ is a good education and communication program. Children, as well as adults, need to learn for themselves the critical viewing and information skills that will lead them to make good judgments about the material that they encounter on the Internet and elsewhere. As concluded by the National Research Council:

Swimming pools pose some threat to the safety and well-being of children. But swimming pools provide benefits to their owners—and children—in many different ways. Technology—in the form of fences around pools, pool alarms, and locks—can help protect children from drowning in swimming pools. However, teaching a child to swim—and when to avoid pools—is a far safer approach than relying on locks, fences, and alarms to prevent him or her from drowning.

Both children and adults need to be able to assess as well as access information—to distinguish between that which is useful and that which is not. We do not help when we simply wall them off from information and ideas that are controversial or disturbing. All libraries, whether or not they filter, must incorporate the value of education into messages about open access.

6. Intellectual freedom, the value most frequently cited when librarians debate the use of filters, serves as our moral compass. By providing access to ideas across the spectrum of human interests and making them broadly accessible, libraries protect and promote the First Amendment right to seek and receive all types of expression. Rather than focus attention on the very small and shrinking fraction of illegal materials on the Internet, public libraries can benefit from stressing their important role as “limited public forums.” As places for access to free and open communication, public libraries are places where people’s free expression rights are safeguarded from government interference. Although the Supreme Court recognized a governmental interest in protecting children from harmful materials, it also found that filters were constitutional only if they could be readily turned off for adults. At the district court level, librarians who testified against the CIPA legislation demonstrated the many effective, but less restrictive measures they employ to ensure safe and enriching experiences online. As supporters of intellectual freedom, libraries that filter should minimize the blocking of legal content,
encourage users to report problems, and make filter disabling as obvious and unobtrusive as possible. When publicizing their efforts, these libraries can point to their successful practices that protect rather than block free expression.

7. Service is one more underlying value, driving librarians to recommend quality resources and adopt best practices in their libraries. Librarians should continue to emphasize that filters cannot take the place of preferred routes that include Internet access policies, user education programs, links to recommended sites, safety guidelines, and reference assistance. They should also locate terminals in places that allow for public monitoring while protecting the confidentiality of users’ online experiences. The vast majority of citizens use the Internet and other library materials responsibly, guided by local library Internet access policies and codes of conduct that address appropriate use and invoke disciplinary action if rules are violated. Libraries that use filters can apply best practices that permit users to disable filters or unblock sites readily. Such valiant attempts both serve the mission of local libraries and embody the values of our profession; we should not overlook them when engaging in the filtering debate.

Moving Beyond the Filtering Debate

In my article “Why Filters Won’t Protect Children or Adults,” I spell out the problems with filters. In short, my concerns are that filters sweep too broadly, block only some sites with indecent materials while restricting access to thousands of legal and useful resources, and fail to block communications sent through other popular channels for distributing pornography like peer-to-peer file sharing. Filters are cumbersome to disable and to override. They do not reflect local library selection criteria, nor do they specifically block the images cited by CIPA as obscene material, child pornography, or items that are harmful to minors. Moreover, filters provide a dangerous and false sense of security, one for which no library or librarian wants to be responsible by blindly promoting filters as a cure-all. And, as many librarians have discovered, they are costly to purchase and maintain. These problems are well-documented in the literature and were acknowledged as findings of fact by both the district, appeals, and Supreme Courts. Our best solution is to educate the public about effective and efficient use of the Internet, encourage parental responsibility, and let the government go after illegal Web site operators to shut them down.

When I was ALA president, I was barraged with complaints about restrictions that libraries placed on Internet access. Granted, I also received my share of gory, attention-getting stories about pornography on library computer screens. Today, these images are cited far less frequently, primarily because the vast majority of people use libraries responsibly. And in the meantime, libraries have learned to manage these new technologies effectively using a variety of tools, not just filters. While many continue to dispute whether these blunt instruments work effectively, it is time to move on from the filtering debate to safeguarding constitutionally protected speech in compliance with the law as modified by the Supreme Court. This means ensuring that libraries turn off filters immediately upon request; otherwise, the Court will consider an “as applied challenge.” In sum, we must present libraries as bastions of democracy that safeguard free speech as well as provide safe and enriching havens for both children and adults. We can accomplish this goal by reaffirming our commitment to our core values, expressed through the Library Bill of Rights and ALA’s original filtering resolution.

For centuries, inventors have introduced new information and communication technologies. Scholars such as Langdon Winner, Robert Heilbroner, and Jorge Schement argue that these inventions have naturally evolved as products of the industrial revolution. “When considered in an historical context,” asserts another scholar, Susan Kretchmer, “it is clear that the current debate parallels the legal turmoil and societal upheaval created by the introduction of every major innovation in communication technology—writing, the printing press, the telegraph, the telephone, radio, and television.” Librarians have successfully incorporated new technologies for many decades, relying on our enduring values and professional judgment. The Internet is no different. Like generations before us, we must pick up the gauntlet and set the terms of the discourse to ensure open access. In short, don’t think of an elephant. Know your values and frame the debate.

Responses by Skip Auld (SA) and Nancy Kranich (NK)

SA: Nancy Kranich states that I “abandon the language of my core values by framing the argument defensively” and that I thereby “reinforce the frame of those eager to damage the image of libraries.” Actually, in my opinion, librarians have damaged themselves by failing to recognize the reality of this influx of pornography into the public space of our community libraries. It’s perhaps more accurate to say that our professional association, ALA, has damaged our image by insisting on understanding pornography on the Internet through the prism of our core intellectual freedom values developed decades prior to its arrival.

NK: Libraries have done a remarkably good job dealing with Internet access. Neither Skip Auld nor the government’s witnesses in the CIPA case have produced convincing evidence that libraries have a serious problem. At the same time, librarians all around the country have taken many steps to ensure that children (and adults) experience a safe and enriching experience online. The solution Auld chooses is not the solution that many of his colleagues choose. Indeed, not only librarians, but also the Supreme Court, affirmed the importance of the First Amendment in this debate over filters. They found that filters are only constitutional if libraries let users know when sites are blocked, disable filters for adults, and unblock useful sites for children.

SA: I appreciate the fact that Kranich is showcasing our newly adopted Core Values Statement. In her discussion of protecting the confidentiality and privacy of library users, Kranich recommends privacy screens and recessed terminals. Practically speaking, I have not found these to be user-friendly; nor have I heard of public libraries using them effectively except in rare instances when users are willing to put up with them for personal reasons. (I’d be interested in hearing from readers whose users do like to use them.)

NK: Privacy screens are among the many tools libraries employ to protect confidentiality, privacy, and intellectual freedom. Libraries determine what works for them locally; others may learn from their experience, adopt similar measures, or dismiss the solutions proven useful elsewhere. Why not host a series in
According to ALA’s “Statement on Labeling and Rating Systems,” adopted in its amended form at the Midwinter Meeting in Boston in January 2005:

A variety of organizations promulgate rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public concerning their opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by the library violates the Library Bill of Rights. Adopting such systems into law may be unconstitutional. If such legislation is passed, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law’s applicability to library operations. Publishers, industry groups, and distributors sometimes add ratings to material or include them as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse such practices. However, removing or destroying such ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation (see Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights). Some find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging materials as objectionable. However, injustice and ignorance, rather than justice and enlightenment, result from such practices. The American Library Association opposes any efforts that result in closing any path to knowledge.

SA: In Kranich’s comments on the Core Value of Diversity, she says “If we are committed to attracting underserved populations to libraries, we must highlight resources offered, not items denied.” She goes on to say libraries “must alert citizens of their rights.” Well, in the first place, computers and Internet access are in themselves a vital magnet attracting lower-income, “underserved” populations. And if we are to inform these citizens of their rights, is she saying we should inform them that they have the right to pornography in the center of our communities, in our libraries?

NK: Libraries are now required by law to disable filters for adults and unblock constitutionally protected sites for children. Unfortunately, many do not inform their users that filters are employed, when they block particular sites, or how they can be disabled. These libraries are at risk of an “as applied” challenge, as spelled out by the Supreme Court. ALA urges libraries to recognize users’ rights under the First Amendment and provides guidance about minimizing the risk of such a legal challenge. ALA also recommends that libraries adopt and enforce a Code of Conduct. When users violate the law or fail to follow well-publicized rules, libraries should take appropriate actions to maintain order.

SA: Discussing the Core Value of Intellectual Freedom, Kranich rightly calls it “our moral compass.” She speaks about “providing access to ideas across the spectrum of human interests . . . and (promoting) the First Amendment right to seek and receive all types of expression.” I return to Les Asheim’s statement in 1953 that “the library which does not stock a book . . . which is punishable by law as pornographic, will not be considered here. The real question of censorship versus selection arises when the librarian, exercising his own judgment, decides against a book which has every legal right to representation on his shelves.”

With Internet pornography, we really aren’t talking about providing access to ideas. We’re talking about providing access to
pictures and video of private parts in public places, that are highly inappropriate, but “constitutionally protected,” material.

NK: When people use the Internet in libraries, they choose what sites they will view. Only when librarians specifically identify best sites or link users to recommended sources are they involved in selection. Librarians do not check what materials people bring into a library on their own. Nor do they limit what personal resources users may read while visiting the library. Likewise, they do not intervene to determine what sites are viewed on the Internet. Disruptive or illegal behavior, not content, warrants punitive action by a library. Asheim advocated for highly trained librarians to make selection decisions, not filtering companies whose staff have neither the knowledge of particular local communities nor the expertise in selecting resources for local residents. Providing access to the Internet is not equivalent to selecting and preserving a local library collection. “Selection” is the wrong model, or “frame,” because filters are inherently incapable of appropriately understanding and dealing with either the Internet or intellectual freedom values.

SA: Kranich discusses librarians’ district court testimony against CIPA, which “demonstrated the many effective less restrictive measures they employ to ensure safe and enriching experiences online.” My experience has been that all these measures were not as effective as a precisely targeted filter. She states that “libraries that filter should minimize the blocking of legal content,” I agree; that they should “encourage users to report problems,” I agree; and that they should “make filter disabling as obvious and unobtrusive as possible,” again, I agree.

NK: The vast majority of people use libraries responsibly. Why penalize them because a few may violate the norms of a community? Most librarians are proud of and positive about the experiences of community members using the Internet. Libraries offer opportunities for access and participation in the digital age unimaginable just a few years ago. Those experiences deserve attention in this column.

SA: Discussing the Core Value of Service, she talks about “effective less restrictive measures,” such as “Internet access policies, user-education programs, links to recommended sites, safety guidelines, and reference assistance.” Librarians should also locate terminals in places that allow for public monitoring while protecting the confidentiality of users’ online experiences. All these nonfilter measures can be in place and strongly enforced but still leave computer screens full of pornography that library users don’t want to be there in public view. Precisely targeted filters can clear out the bulk of this pornography without significantly diminishing access to the rest of the world of Internet content.

NK: Auld’s rhetoric about the content of library computer screens distorts the truth about how the Internet is used in most public libraries, whether or not they filter. Unfortunately, filters are incapable of the precise targeting he suggests. Filters underblock, as well as overblock, giving parents and librarians a false sense of security that their children are safe, when in fact they are not. Many public libraries offer user education programs, and PLA participates in promoting information literacy. Indeed, the dawning of the information age necessitates the development of broader information skills if people are to separate the wheat from the chaff, the true from the untrue, the rumor from the real. Even those already proficient at finding, evaluating, and applying information to solve daily problems can be overwhelmed by the proliferation of information and the difficulty of sorting through it. To cope successfully, citizens must be able to identify, evaluate, and apply information and communicate it efficiently, effectively, and responsibly. They must acquire information literacy skills to flourish in the workplace as well as to carry out the day-to-day activities of citizens in a developed, democratic society. Information literacy is a critical life skill in today’s information jungle. Libraries are the institutions instrumental in teaching these skills as well as helping users navigate through the uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information. Both libraries and communities benefit when we promote these valuable services and assert our important role in helping people make critical judgments about information in the digital age.

SA: Kranich expresses concern “that filters sweep too broadly, block only some sites with indecent materials while restricting access to thousands of legal and useful resources, and fail to block communications sent through other popular channels or modes for distributing pornography like peer-to-peer file sharing. Filters are cumbersome to disable and to override.” I believe this statement reflects a serious misunderstanding of the effectiveness of filters. Granted, many libraries set up their filters in a grossly overbroad way. My own children’s school system uses filtering that overblocks significantly. However, this problem is not with filtering as a technology. Furthermore, the idea that filters are cumbersome to disable or override is a generalization that is simply not true. She states that “filters do not reflect local selection criteria.” Well? It’s the Internet, not a universe of physical items from which librarians select. “Selection” is the wrong model for understanding intellectual freedom and the Internet. In Kranich’s words, it’s the wrong “frame.”

NK: Filtering systems are not only imprecise, but also capable of blocking categories far beyond the images specified by CIPA. Accountability is needed to ensure that institutions deploying filters are setting them to block only those levels and categories that comply with the law. Needless to say, too many public institutions are stretching coverage into territory that falls outside the law. Filters, like other technologies, are only as useful—good or bad—as the human beings who use them. Technology never functions in a vacuum. Just as we do not hold cars solely responsible for auto accidents, injuries, and pollution, we cannot blame filters alone for inappropriate settings.

SA: I, for one, do not promote filters as a “cure-all.” However, our professional association has not effectively met the challenge of Internet pornography over the past decade. We treated the Internet as though it was bringing Huck Finn, Heather Has Two Mommies, and comparable “banned books” into the public space of our libraries. To the contrary, it was bringing an entirely inappropriate mélange of pornographic imagery. Condemning filters as ALA has done is not safeguarding “ideas.” It’s playing ostrich and failing to manage the environment within our libraries.

NK: For many decades, ALA has supported the public’s right to access constitutionally protected speech. Unfortunately, filters fail to support that right. ALA’s values have served us well in the past and continue to apply today. After libraries began offering public Internet access, ALA led the legal challenge against the Communications Decency Act. Few questioned
our unanimous decision from the Supreme Court in that case. Afterwords, when people tried to fearmonger by attacking and ridiculing libraries for promoting access, ALA presented a persistent and consistent message that shaped the debate, framing the issues based on our core values. As a result, most major media coverage related to the Supreme Court CIPA decision sided with ALA's position. From the New York Times, to the Washington Post and USA Today, the media favored the position argued by ALA and other plaintiffs. To illustrate, here are some press statements about the case.

The Supreme Court dealt a blow to free expression and put librarians in a serious bind this week by upholding a law requiring libraries to use filters on all computers with Internet access.26

Ironically, the belated CIPA has a marginal impact on Internet porn, but it widens the digital divide that federal funds were intended to close. CIPA will impose its burden mainly on people who depend on libraries for their computer access.27

Congress should have relied on the wisdom of the local librarian, instead of imposing rules that stifle intellectual inquiry.28

Ruling on filtering Internet porn could widen digital divide.29

The Supreme Court passed up an opportunity to put a bad law out of its misery when it ruled on Monday that Congress can force schools and libraries to install software that blocks Internet users from accessing pornography. Everyone agrees that kids should not be viewing porn on the Web. But the Children’s Internet Protection Act vastly oversteps that goal, replacing local discretion with a heavy-handed federal mandate. Libraries that receive federal funds will now be compelled to act as cyber-censors.30

The battle over Internet access has not ended. States are now following the lead of Congress in proposing legislation mandating filters. As the library community faces these challenges, we cannot afford to change our values in midstream and capitulate to intimidation. After ALA passed its 1997 Resolution on the Use of Filtering Software in Libraries, members revisited this policy on several occasions. Following the most recent review in August 2003, former ALA president Carla Hayden issued a press release reaffirming ALA members’ commitment to this position. It stated:

ALA reaffirms core values, commitment to members at August 23 meeting: A statement from ALA President Carla Hayden

August 25, 2003

(CHICAGO) On August 23, a group of librarians and trustees representing many of ALA’s committees, divisions and libraries of all types gathered to discuss how best to serve libraries and the millions of people who depend on their services in light of the recent Supreme Court ruling on the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). I was proud to be a part of a process that reaffirmed our profession’s fundamental values of equity of access and intellectual freedom for all. . . . The American Library Association (ALA) has a long tradition of providing practical, real-life assistance to our members, as well as developing best practices and ideals for quality service. At the meeting, ALA representatives from across the country recommitted themselves to developing the different tools necessary to inform and assist librarians and the communities they serve. Equity of access is a core value of the library profession and the ALA and we must be clear that installing filters that block access to safe and legal information deepens the digital divide between those who have Internet access at home, work or school and those who ‘have not.’ Public libraries are the main access point for millions of Americans who do not otherwise have access to the wide world of information available online, and we must ensure that libraries continue to serve all people equally.31

SA: The fact that most major media outlets sided with ALA’s position testifies to the political skill of ALA as an advocacy group and to ALA’s consistent and persistent message that filters are ineffective “blunt instruments.” It took the Supreme Court to recognize that government has a compelling interest in taking strong measures to prevent the display and use of “obscenity, child pornography, and material harmful to minors” in libraries. A final, legal determination that images are illegal requires a court case. Librarians and other library workers do not have the luxury of awaiting such determinations when faced with a profusion of pornographic images in their day-to-day work on the floors of American libraries.

Kranich says “we cannot afford to abandon our values in midstream and capitulate to intimidation.” I agree. But I believe the use of filters does not compromise our values. Rather, filters simply provide a means that should be used carefully and cautiously, in compliance with law as interpreted by courts.

NK: The promises of the twenty-first-century information society must not be placed in peril by those content with restricting public access to information and the free flow of ideas. A high-tech society must not become a highly controlled society. The vigilance and activism of those concerned with protecting free expression is more important than ever if the American ideals enshrined in the First Amendment are to remain the beacon of our way of life in the new millennium. We must speak up and fight for information equity and open access for all. Otherwise, we will endanger our most precious right in a democratic society—the right of free speech and inquiry. ■
References and Notes

11. Ibid., xii.
25. Asheim, “Not Censorship but Selection.”
The Worst Day Writing Is Better than the Best Day at Work

An Interview with Printz Honor winning author Terry Trueman

Stephanie A. Squicciarini

Described as controversial, innovative, charming, and engaging, Terry Trueman is known for taking intense subjects and complex characters and making them loveable, admirable, compassionate, sympathetic, and then again, not so much... all at the same time. This talent earned Trueman a 2001 Printz Honor for his first book, *Stuck in Neutral* (HarperCollins, 2000), a book about Shawn McDaniel, a fourteen-year-old boy with severe cerebral palsy, told uniquely from Shawn’s perspective. His second United States publication (Trueman’s *Swallowing the Sun* was published in the United Kingdom), *Inside Out* (HarperCollins, 2003), gives readers an intimate look inside the mind of a boy struggling with schizophrenia. With his books being cited on numerous state, regional, and national awards lists (including nods from ALA and YALSA), Trueman revisits the McDaniel family with his latest book, *Cruise Control* (HarperCollins, 2004). Told during the same time period as *Stuck in Neutral* (and thus a companion, not a sequel), readers step inside Shawn’s brother Paul, a young man plagued by anger and resentment with much of it aimed at himself.

**Public Libraries:** When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

**Terry Trueman:** I pretty much always wanted to be a writer; certainly from the time I was sixteen or seventeen. Of course, in my case I wanted to “have written” long before I learned that I actually loved writing—but that’s a bit of a different story.

**PL:** How has what you expected differed from the reality of being a writer?

**TT:** It’s like the old cliché about being careful what you wish for. I think everyone who writes does so with a conscious intention of making art out of words (a fairly grandiose goal in the first place, I admit) but almost anyone who does that hopes to be read; it would follow that the more one is read, the happier one would be. But there are strange ironies and costs in being successful, such as getting pretty well-locked into a style that your readers expect, being on the road for a tremendous amount of the time you used to have for writing, learning how to do everything from schmoozing better to living with a body and mind that are totally whacked out of sense by time zones, and so on. Having so many e-mails and letters from readers and wanting to write them back—and I do try my best to personally write back to all of them! I’m not complaining here, just stating the fact that “making it” has all kinds of hidden prices that you don’t anticipate while you’re eagerly working and praying to “make it.”

**PL:** You were awarded the Michael L. Printz Honor in 2001 for *Stuck in Neutral*. How did receiving that impact you, your life, and your work?

**TT:** I always thank the ALA generally and YALSA specifically for my entire career. I heard a guy say once on National Public Radio (NPR) that a first-time novelist can reasonably expect to sell twenty-two copies of his first novel. Winning a Printz Honor doubled my first six months’ worth of sales within two weeks, and we’ve kept selling steadily since then; obviously, it made all the difference in the world between being ignored and being really widely read. I have to admit that winning a national award made me greedy for more, and I hope I win the actual Printz medal someday. The most important part of it is the title “Printz Honor author,” which only about twenty-five or so people can claim and precedes my name on everything I write and probably everything I ever will write. A tiny downside to achieving such success on your first book is that, of course, everything else I write is judged against *Stuck in Neutral*, and many times those judgments are not necessarily sympathetic—again, I’m not complaining, I’m just saying that there are hidden, unexpected costs to everything good, just as there are hidden, unexpected gifts in everything that we think of as “negative.” Sorry, I know I sound like Mr. Smarty-Pants-Philosophical-Guy here—but it’s all true, you know?

**PL:** The companion book to *Stuck in Neutral*, *Cruise Control*, was recently released. How was it to revisit the McDaniel family? What was it like to give voice to Paul’s anger? Was it easier or more difficult than giving voice to Shawn? Will we ever get to hear Cindy’s (Shawn’s sister) voice?

**TT:** It was great to revisit the McDaniel family and giving voice to Paul’s anger was fun. I always liked Paul and found in his character so much of my own emotion about my son, Sheehan, the person on whom I based Shawn. Paul carries his anger with great power and menace at the start and, honestly, I’m attracted to that kind of power. It probably was easier to give voice to Paul than to Shawn, but this is as much a consequence of having all of the plot timelines and all of the characters, or at least most of them, created. As I think more about your
question, actually the creation of each character, while a very different process, was equally rewarding and fun. Cindy’s story? It’s in the works right now, although my editor at HarperCollins, Toni Markiet tells me we’ve got a ways to go before we have Cindy “right.” I answered Toni, “No duh! Gimme a break—she’s a teenage girl and I’m a fifty-seven-year-old man trying to give her a voice!” She’ll come along though, I’m sure of it.

PL: In what way have your previous experiences as counselor and teacher helped you bring all of your characters to life? Do we see much of “Terry” in any of your characters?

TT: I think there is always a lot of me in everything I write. This isn’t a particularly conscious part of myself; I mean, it’s not like I sit here and think, which part of precious little moi do I wish to expose to the world right now? It’s more involved in the basic understanding of the characters and I suppose that my work as a counselor and teacher play a role—I know they do—but so does everything else: my educational studies and background, being a parent of a kid with special needs, being divorced numerous times, having been in business, getting hired and fired from a variety of jobs, remembering amazing and remarkable people with whom I’ve had various levels of intimacy or closeness, starting with my mom and dad and sister, and moving through many more souls. All of it seems to land in my stories in some form or another.

PL: Who is your favorite character that you have created? Who was the most difficult to bring to life?

TT: The obvious answer would be Shawn; he gave me my career, his creation made all my lifelong dreams of becoming a writer come true. That said, I think I have a soft spot for all my characters and I’m always intrigued by characters that have much more minor roles—what’s going on in that person’s life, what has brought them to the place where they are in the story. Tim-bo and Eddie Farr from Cruise Control, Wally Britton and Becka from No Right Turn, Alan from Inside Out—I love all these characters. Which character was most difficult to bring to life? Well, according to Toni, I’m not doing too well with Cindy so far. Although Toni liked her in the first two books, she’s not too crazy about the way I’ve presented Cindy in her own version, but I’m working on it. Really, I don’t ever think about writing in terms of difficulties or things being hard. I’d be like those guys that have a bumper sticker that reads, “The Worst Day Fishing is Better than the Best Day at Work.” Well, substitute “writing” for “fishing,” and that’s how I usually feel.

PL: Who is your favorite fictional character created by someone else?

TT: You’re asking me about other authors? Who cares? No, seriously, because of the debt I feel I owe Charles Bukowski, I’d have to say that Henry Chinaski, Buk’s alter ego and the protagonist in so many of his poems, stories, and novels would be one choice. I love Louie Banks from Chris Crutcher’s Running Loose and Loudan Swain from Terry Davis’s Vision Quest. If you want me to get all classic on you, I like Kazantzakis’s version of Jesus in his Last Temptation of Christ, and, of course, Anna Karenina by Tolstoy; Huck Finn, Garp—and too many others to remember.

PL: What type of reading did you enjoy as a young adult?

TT: I really didn’t read any novels as a young adult until I started reading the James Bond books by Ian Fleming as a junior in high school. Before that I read magazines like Time, Life, and Mad, comic books, stuff like that—oh yeah, and the sports pages, always the sports pages.

PL: You had to cut out parts of your stories during the editing process. Can you tell us about that process and how it feels to work through those decisions? Might we see parts of those cut scenes in the movie version of Stuck in Neutral?

TT: I’m lucky in that I have had a great editor in Toni Markiet at HarperCollins. I trust her and feel that between the two of us, we probably get the absolute best that my stuff has to offer. Toni’s work is extremely important to me. She and I have a kind of amazing chemistry, borne, I think, out of how differently our brains work and how different our senses of the world are. In some ways, she’s almost like a coauthor to me. I can’t imagine writing as well without her help. But once a part of a story is cut, or edited out, I usually don’t think about it all that much—I just move onto the next part of what’s actually going to be in the story! You’re right, though, that some of the ideas that end up on the cutting-room floor for the books may very well find a second life, a second chance as parts of the movie script—you’ll just have to wait and see!

PL: Much of your earlier work has been geared toward adult readers. How is writing for teens different than writing for adults? How is it similar? Can we expect adult books in the future?

TT: I could say that I never really write for teens and I more or less mean that. I write the best I can and hope it will find the largest and most appreciative audience. Toni once asked me “Why on earth would you want to write for grown-ups?” An interesting question coming from one person in her fifties (sorry Toni) to a guy even older than her! I do write books from the point of view of teens, and in that sense, because I have teenage protagonists, people assume I’m writing for teens, but I don’t feel I do. I write for readers; I don’t care about their ages. How books are edited for marketing purposes is another story but that’s not really my job so much.

PL: The California Center for the Book Letters about Literature competition honors readers who write letters to authors regarding books that have touched them in some way. Last summer you attended the awards ceremony because a letter about your book was selected as a winner. Twelve-year-old Alex Bland, born with cerebral palsy, wrote to you about how Stuck in Neutral touched him in a personal and intense way. You have said that you feel you have given voice to your son, Sheehan, and from the letter Alex wrote, it seems that you have given voice to many more people. What was it like to meet Alex?
How does it make you feel to know how deeply your words have affected his life?

TT: It was wonderful to meet Alex, who is a truly inspirational spirit, and his family and I have actually become rather close friends. They flew up for the premiere reading of Cruise Control at Auntie’s Bookstore in Spokane last October and while here were interviewed for a possible spot on the future DVD of the Stuck in Neutral movie, if and when we ever get it made. They’re great people. I feel humbled, blessed, and honored every time something like this happens.

PL: What can we expect from you in the future?

TT: My next novel is in copy editing, and it’s not Cindy’s story; it’s a book unrelated to the McDaniel family saga. It will be my fourth novel with HarperCollins and it’s titled No Right Turn. I’m actually very excited about it. It’s another edgy, high-concept story (I hope that doesn’t sound too pretentious, but that’s what it is). It’s about a kid named Jordan. When Jordan is thirteen his father commits suicide, and the story proper starts up three years later when Jordan’s mom is starting to date. I’ll give away this much more . . . a costar in the book is my 1976 Corvette Stingray and the theme is how it sometimes takes something magical to save us from pain and loss that we might not otherwise be saved from, if that makes any sense. There’s the McDaniel movie in the works titled Stuck in Neutral, and I’m currently working on Cindy’s story, which will also explore Tim’s story. I have at least three other novels in mind, including a story based on Joey and Alan from Inside Out that will be my first actual sequel (the books related to Stuck in Neutral are companion novels—not sequels—as they take place during the same time periods). But I have a few other kinds of projects that I’m hopeful about, including a republication of my poem Sheehan, the poem excerpted in Stuck in Neutral, along with a very thorough interview—this will be almost a memoir, albeit a strange one. I’d like to get back to poetry someday. Of course, I plan to stay on the road and keep speaking to kids and teachers and librarians for as long as people want to hear me.

PL: What is the one question you have never been asked in an interview and wish you would be? Feel free to answer it as well!

TT: Perhaps “What’s it like to be a stinkin’ genius?” I don’t know. Interviews are funny things. It’s hard not to get all puffed up when people have an interest in you but getting all puffed up makes you sound like an idiot or a jerk or both right out of the gate. So I think it’s smarter for me to just answer the questions you ask, rather than make up my own.

Stephanie Squicciarini is the Teen Services Librarian at the Fairport (N.Y.) Public Library; ssquicci@libraryweb.org. She interviewed Terry Trueman (www.terrytrueman.com; ttrueman1215@msn.com) via e-mail and telephone during December 2004 and January 2005. Stephanie just finished How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff and is currently reading Best Foot Forward by Joan Bauer. Kathleen Hughes is currently reading Ramones: the Complete Twisted History by Dick Porter.
Wiki While You Work

Steven M. Cohen

I've discussed many new Web tools over the past year and how they can be implemented into the library environment. From Weblogs to RSS to open tagging structures, trying to stay on top of every new technology can cause a migraine. If you are too overwhelmed, I’d suggest that you turn the page and go onto the next article because I'm going to introduce you to yet another tool (sorry, it's my job). But, if you decide to move on and skip this column, consider yourself warned. This tool has the potential to increase work flow and communications among staff members as well as being used as a reference resource. Intrigued? Follow me into the land of wikis . . . and once you get there, you may not want to leave.

A wiki is a living, open Web site that allows anyone to edit, add, and delete content. The most popular wiki is Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), a fully open encyclopedia whose entries are constantly being changed by users all over the world. The theory behind Wikipedia is that the collective intelligence of its users will determine not only the content of the entries (as of this writing—at the end of March 2005—there are 524,924 entries), but will also act as a system of checks and balances. In essence, the intelligence of the whole is greater than that of the smartest person in the group, which, in the case of wikis, can mean the entire world.

Take, for example, the entry on Bill Clinton (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Clinton). Content from this document has been added to over the years to not only include his biography, work as a governor and president, but his efforts after leaving political office. The last entry includes his work with former president Bush on the disaster relief from the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Links within Wikipedia take readers to other entries. While you are in Wikipedia, take a look at the extensive coverage on the Tsunami disaster (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake). Other wikis that act in parallel to Wikipedia include Wiktionary (http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page), a wiki-based dictionary and thesaurus; Wikibooks (http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page), a collection of wiki-based textbooks; and Wikinews (http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Main_Page), a wiki-based news resource. Another wiki that fascinates me is Wikipes (http://wikipes.com/), a wiki for recipes launched in January 2005.

There are pros and cons with all new technology (although wikis aren’t really a “new” technology, having their origin in the mid-1990s). In library and information science, there are many arguments for and against wikis. One obvious argument against the use of wikis as a reference source is one of quality and accuracy. Since anyone can edit or delete entries, how can librarians be sure that the information contained in the entries are complete and truthful? There is no accountability or authority. This point is very well-taken, and librarians should be wary of using Wikipedia as the only resource for answering reference questions. That said, there is no reason why Wikipedia can't be used as a starting point for reference inquiries. Once the content from the Wikipedia post has been collected, further research can be conducted to refute or add to the information gathered. This follow-up step, however, should be used for every reference question that is asked of us, regardless of the initial source, particularly since there is recent news about errors being found in traditional print reference resources. Be wary of every source that is used for information retrieval and double- and triple-check all information for accuracy.

In the Wikipedia, controversial issues such as abortion are also at risk of being spammed with invalid and hateful discussion. In addition, it is also possible that those who decide to edit a particular issue will hold a certain viewpoint and those with the opposite views will not be adding their own. Thus, the balance of information can shift.

Another argument against the use of wikis is one of archiving (a principle that librarians have a vested interest in). Once someone has edited content in a wiki, the deleted content is no longer available. This issue is one that the creators of wiki products have encountered for some time and have worked to improve. Wikipedia, for example, archives every version of an entry so that users can go back and see the changes.

While the concept of a wiki is an open document that is available for everyone to edit, they have also proved to be useful in business environments, which might translate well into the library world. For example, librarians working on a project could communicate with one another, add to or revise documents, and throw ideas off one another within the wiki environment. This could not only save precious time, but also could cut back on unnecessary e-mail correspondence.

Librarians who help build subject pages, a collection of online resources centered around a particular subject (which are becoming very popular again) can use a wiki to add resources to a central Web repository, where they can be annotated, checked for accuracy and reliability, and given a review by other members of the staff before being posted onto the library Web site. Those who work the reference desk might find wikis useful to communicate among staff. I have advocated using weblogs for this purpose, but wikis could do a similar (and possibly better) job. With weblogs, other members of a team can’t edit posts (unless they are the administrator), but they can with wikis. Again, this saves time and the collective intelligence of the group should shine through.

When we were putting together the initial guidelines for the PLA Blog (www.plablog.org), a wiki was the perfect tool to use. If Andrea Mercado (my comanager for the PLA Blog) and I wanted the PLA administration to have access to the rough drafts of the guidelines that we were writing up for input, we only had to supply them with a password. Thus, instead of sending back documents as attachments to each other via e-mail, each person only had to access the wiki to see the latest
edits. Everyone who had access to the wiki had a text color that they were to utilize for editing purposes, so we would know who changed what content. In addition, at no point was anything deleted until it was agreed upon by all. We used the wiki as a central point for ideas, questions, and as a sounding board. What finally emerged was a document that we were all satisfied with and contributed to from beginning to end. The wiki was our blog administrative community.

Of course, it is possible to build your own wiki software, but I wouldn’t bother with that. There are many cheap (and sometimes free) wiki tools to utilize. Jotspot (www.jot.com) is still in beta-testing (as of mid-April 2005) and provides free access for ninety days, after which there is a fee. There are many features that make using Jot useful, such as the ability to e-mail text directly to the wiki, Instant Message icons showing who is online, and a full calendar. Jot is a third-party software, which means it runs on the Jot server. One feature I hope they add would be the option of downloading the code to a personal server that would provide more control of the product from the user. Since access is only available on the Jot server, it is password-protected for those who will be working on the wiki.

XWiki (www.xwiki.com) is another wiki tool that provides the option of using their server (again, third party) or the option of downloading it to a personal server. Xwiki is an open source too, which means that programmers are constantly working to make it a better tool. Xwiki can also be downloaded onto a password-protected intranet. Visit their additional features page (www.xwiki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/WhyIsXWikiDifferent) for more information.

One last wiki product that I’ll address here (although there are several more) is called Seedwiki (www.seedwiki.com). Seedwiki is similar to Jot in that it runs on the Seedwiki server. Some features of Seedwiki include sending e-mail and files to the Seedwiki page, and it allows you to format groups of Seedwiki pages as a blog, slideshow, or menu. Seedwiki also keeps an archived version of every page, which can be important (as was shown in the Wikipedia example above).

Wiki can be an excellent tool to use within the library for communication and collaboration. If used by all members of a team (you can lead a librarian to the wiki, but you can’t make him collaborate), it should cut down the time needed for certain projects. Also, the uncluttering of the e-mail inbox (which is becoming a recurring theme in my articles) can be a direct result of utilizing a wiki for communication. No more searching through e-mail after e-mail, wasting time looking for that particular piece of information. Just look to the wiki to solve these and many other problems.

Steven M. Cohen is a Librarian with PubSub Concepts in New York. He is also the creator of librarystuff.net, a weblog dedicated to resources for keeping current and professional development. You can reach him at stevenmcohen@gmail.com.

Cohen is currently reading Blink by Malcolm Gladwell. The next book on his reading list is Dark Hero of the Information Age: In Search of Robert Wiener, the Father of Cybernetics by Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman.

References


Resources

Wiktionary—http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page
Wikibooks—http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page
Wikinews—http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Main_Page
Wikipes—http://wikipes.com
PLA Blog—www.plablog.org
Jotspot—www.jot.com
Xwiki—www.xwiki.com
XWIKI additional features page—www.xwiki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Main/WhyIsXWikiDifferent
Seedwiki—www.seedwiki.com

Smart Ideas for the Smartest Card

Seven libraries have been awarded $100 prizes from PLA for their use of the “Smartest Card. Get One. Use it.” campaign:

- The Athens–Clarke County (Ga.) Public Library, which teamed up with Chick-Fil-A to sign up more than eight hundred new cardholders.
- The Jacksboro (Tenn.) Public Library for its library card, countertop cards, newspaper ads, and other promotional materials using the “Smartest Card” logo, and its special outreach to government officials.
- The Lee County (Fla.) Library System, which did special outreach to local schools, businesses and county employees.
- McCracken County Public Library in Paducah, Kentucky, for a partnership with Sprint and local radio station 105.5 The Cat to deliver the “Smartest Card” message during Library Card Sign-up Month 2004.
- The Pamunkey Regional Library in Hanover, Virginia, which put a “Smartest Card” in the hands of some one thousand elementary students during the month of April using the “Smartest Card” theme.
- The State Library of North Carolina in Raleigh, for a statewide media campaign during Library Card Sign-up Month.
- The Sterling Municipal Library in Baytown, Texas, which partnered with the Baytown Sun to produce ads featuring local celebrities and the “Smartest Card.”

The campaign, launched in September 2004, builds on ALA’s Campaign for America’s Libraries. It aims to build public use and support for libraries. PLA is committed to long-term support of the Smartest Card campaign.

For more information, see the Smartest Card Web site (www.ala.org/pla). Click on the Smartest Card icon.
Digital Video Recording

Personalized Television

A. Paula Wilson

A couple of years ago, my editor suggested I write about TiVo. So I spent some time researching it. Then I decided I just couldn’t find the library tie-in. I couldn’t see how online journaling would be relevant to librarians, or libraries. Now I do. So when I decided to write about TiVo (www.tivo.com) in this column my editor remarked, “I assume you’ll be able to find a library tie-in.” Sure. Shouldn’t librarians know what TiVo is? What if they were asked about it at the reference desk? Perhaps TiVo could even be used as a reference tool!

Do you remember when you could only get about three local stations on the television—with a rabbit-ear antenna? The small loop attached to the rabbit ears allowed you to receive broadcasts over the very fuzzy UHF channels—a few more options, if a rabbit-ear antenna was connected to the television—with a rabbit-ear antenna? The small loop attached to the rabbit ears allowed you to receive broadcasts over the very fuzzy UHF channels—a few more options, if you were lucky. Life was simple back then. Since the stores were closed on Sunday anyway, one could leisurely plan the shows to watch that week by marking up the TV Guide that arrived with the newspaper. This was long before cable, MTV, and HBO.

Years later, with cable, came video recorders that allowed you to record movies and television programs onto VHS tapes. When satellite television entered onto the scene, viewers had hundreds of programs from which to choose including network programs, premium movies, documentaries, music, sports, and more . . . so much more that a new technology, digital video recording, came onto the scene to help consumers manage their television viewing. You have probably heard many people talk about TiVo, which is one of the most popular digital video recorder (DVR) services available. DVRs are most commonly purchased with a satellite television service like DirecTV (www.directv.com) or Dish Network (www.dishnetwork.com).

I confess I’m a TiVo zealot, having subscribed to it since 2001. I use the word as a verb (“I’ll TiVo it”) and a noun (“I have TiVo”). TiVo is a service that automatically finds and records programs using a telephone line or broadband connection to download to a box. The box works with any TV setup: antenna, cable, digital cable, and satellite, and can hold from 40 up to 140 hours of programing depending on the selected model. The price of the box ranges from $99 to $399. Subscribers must also pay a $12.95 monthly fee or a one-time fee of $299 for lifetime service. Comcast (www.comcast.com) and Dish Network have introduced competing DVR services, and new computers that include DVR functions are also available. Market studies indicate that others will be jumping into the DVR services, which will produce some very competitive pricing. A standard phone line from the TiVo box to the outlet is required once during setup. You can then continue to use your phone or connect your box to an existing wired or wireless home network and broadband to receive updated information on future programming.

Once the initial setup is done, the fun begins. You can start to program the recorder. For example, the recorder allows you to download every episode of your favorite series (minus the repeats) and shows based on keyword, actor, or director names. If you’re interested in sporting events like Wimbledon, the TiVo service will record each event. You do not need to know the day, time, or channel it is broadcast. TiVo takes care of that for you. Words in my wish list include “book” and “library.” At any time, I can review descriptions of future programs that include those words or view the programs that have already been recorded through the “Now Playing List.” Right now I have the following programs queued: The Creative Life (PBSU) covers home libraries, altered books, and other book crafts; tDesign (Fine Living) includes an architectural tour of the Seattle (Wash.) Public Library; and (3) episodes from Book TV (CSPAN). I often think TiVo would help be extremely helpful in finding footage for The Hollywood Librarian (www.hollywoodlibrarian.com), a documentary about librarians. For example, today my TiVo recorded an episode from Seinfeld where the New York Public Library asks Jerry about a book overdue since 1971.

Is it a stretch to think that TiVo, or a similar service, could be used as another resource that librarians tap into to answer requests for information? For example, a customer could be given a list of programs that meet certain subject criteria. Taking this one step further, the librarian could even record the programs to a disk to provide directly to the customer. Sound far-fetched? Perhaps. But e-content providers such as Overdrive (www.overdrive.com) already have plans to provide library patrons with the ability to download full videos online.

TiVo is very useful for those of us with specific television preferences. While viewing recorded programs TiVo allows you to fast-forward through commercials, rewind, or view in slow motion. Of course, TiVo also offers live television. You can even view a live program while TiVo is recording. It can record two programs at a time, and recorded programs will delete after a stated time unless you want to keep them forever. A DVD recorder will allow the recording of programs onto DVD. With a plug-in (My DVD Studio by Sonic Solutions [www.sonic.com], $49) you can transfer recordings to your computer—great for traveling with a laptop. Appropriately, this service is called TiVoToGo.

The wide range of programs available through satellite television necessitates a service like TiVo in order for viewers to take advantage of the wide range of programming available.
to manage the vast amount of information coming through the tube. DVR technology also offers viewers personalized television based on their preferences. If you are interested in TiVo and want more details there are already books about it such as TiVo for Dummies by Andy Rathbone (For Dummies, 2004) and How to Do Everything with Your TiVo by Todd W. Carter and Michael Bellomo (McGraw-Hill Osborne Media, 2004). Still in its infancy, we can expect DVR services to become more sophisticated with more competitors entering the playing field to take away TiVo’s hold on the market.

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A. Paula Wilson is the author of Library Web Sites: Creating Online Collections and Services (ALA, 2004) and 100 Ready-to-Use Pathfinders for the Web (Neal-Schuman, 2005). She is also the Web/Outreach Services Coordinator at the Maricopa County Library District, 17811 N. 32nd St., Phoenix, AZ 85032-1201; paulawilson@mcld.maricopa.gov. Paula Wilson is currently reading The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown.

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PLA President-Elect to Spotlight the Value of Libraries

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Innovative Fund-raising Opportunities for Your Library

Stephanie K. Gerding

Any fund-raising strategy you adopt should be incorporated into your overall fund-raising, marketing, and communications plans. This will help ensure that in the process of asking for support, your library is also operating strategically. Fund-raising should be combined with outreach on specific issues and campaigns, and should promote library visibility in your community. Remember the key to fund-raising success always lies in building relationships with your community members, donors, and library advocates.

If you decide to initiate online fund-raising efforts, you still need to be proactive. Putting a “donate” button on your Web site or participating in an online mall is just a part of fund-raising efforts. You need to create an overall fund-raising campaign that gets people’s attention, informs them of library issues, and makes a clear and determined pitch for their financial support. Combine online fund-raising on the Web with marketing in your library newsletter and other print materials and at all library events and programs.

A “Donate Now” Button for Your Library Web Site

Online donations offer a quick, easy way to donate that is attractive to a new generation of tech-savvy donors. With a donation button on your library Web site, visitors can donate to your library online or fill out a form to be mailed in with a check. You must have a secure Web site that is able to accept credit cards. But don’t despair if this seems impractical for your library. There are companies that specialize in this type of service.

Do-It-Yourself (DIY)

If you want to DIY, your library Web site must be able to handle credit card transactions securely online. This requires an Internet Service Provider (ISP) that supports Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), which allows information to be transferred securely from one computer to another. Secure Web sites have URLs that begin with “https://.” Not all ISPs include SSL support, but the service usually isn’t very expensive. The next step is to create an online donation form. If you have any experience in creating Web page forms, this should be a fairly simple process. Then, once the Web site is ready, you need the ability to authorize credit card donations. This requires a merchant account, and you will need to either manually manage donations or have an automated process.

The advantage to creating your own donation button is that you control the page design and can fully incorporate it into your Web site, as opposed to a donation service where the donor may have to leave your Web site to make a donation. You will need to have someone with Web authoring skills, and it may cost more to have a secure area on your Web site.

Have Someone Else Do It

If creating a donation button and fund-processing system sounds overwhelming, you can contact a provider that specializes in online donations. The provider can supply you with a custom donation page and online form, and you won’t have to create the Web site from scratch. However, you will need to pay for this service. The charge may be 3 to 5 percent of the donation amount, plus a monthly fee, and it may also require a setup fee. Research this decision carefully and understand all of the terms and fees before you select a provider. The service provider will provide step-by-step instructions for adding the button. The donor will click on the “Donate” button and be taken to the donation Web page for your library. Online donation providers include JustGive (www.justgive.org), Network for Good (www.networkforgood.org), Groundspring (www.groundspring.org), and PayPal (www.paypal.com).

An Instant Online Fund-raising Web Site for Your Library

Shop for the Library (www.shopforthelibrary.net) is a newly launched online shopping mall designed to help any library, anywhere, with a fund-raising opportunity. The Shop for the Library Web site features more than seven hundred merchants, including such well-known stores as Target, Macy’s, Gap, Office Depot, and Circuit City. Every purchase initiated through the Web site generates a commission for the library or library support group of the shopper’s choice. Shop for the Library then mails the library a check for the amount earned, up to 25 percent of the purchase price.
There is no added cost to the shopper for making purchases through Shop for the Library, nor is there any charge for libraries to participate other than the cost of promoting it to your community. The Web site also provides marketing tips and templates for everything needed for a local public awareness campaign—flyers, bookmarks, press releases, newsletter articles, Web banners, and more. Add a link to your library Web page or coordinate a shopping event by sending out invitations for a shopping trip that doesn’t involve crowds, parking lots, or overly motivated sales staff.

First-time visitors to the Shop for the Library Web site simply choose a beneficiary library from a database which includes the main library location of all public library systems in the United States. Other library types, branch libraries, and Friends groups that want to be listed in addition to or instead of the main library should contact Shop for the Library at support@shopforthelibrary.net.

Dan Theobald is the principal consultant for i2i Communications, one of the firms supporting the venture. He revealed, “I think what’s interesting (at least to me) about Shop for the Library, is that this type of thing is pretty new in the library community, but has been going on for a long time in the K–12 fund-raising field through Schoolpop.com (school-pop.com).” Schoolpop has helped schools raise $9.2 million since 1999, and has more than 50,000 participating schools and school-support organizations. Dan believes there is great potential for similar results with public libraries.

Local Fund-raiser Becomes a National Campaign!


Libraries Matter was launched by Alliance, but the Web site’s FAQ reveals that the hope is “that any library that wishes to have some fun, gain visibility, and raise funds will join.” Alliance will act as the wholesale seller of the wristbands. Individual wristband proceeds go to local libraries, as do any proceeds for their causes. Participating libraries can buy fifty bracelets for $80 and one hundred for $150. The suggested sales price for libraries selling individual bracelets is $3 or six-packs for $15. As of April 7, 2005, libraries from thirty-five states have purchased bracelets.

The Web site also includes the various causes and projects for which specific libraries sell the bracelets. The mission of Alliance’s Communications and Marketing Department is to make libraries more visible and valuable to citizens. By aggregating library “causes” on one site, they hope to raise the visibility of libraries. Libraries are using the bracelets to increase awareness of the library; to raise funding for facilities, technology, or programming; and even as gifts to donors or advisory groups. For Alliance, the proceeds from wholesale wristband sales will fund technology upgrades in its new 24,000-square-foot, high-tech training center in East Peoria, Illinois. Additional profits will be reinvested into librarian training.

Raising Money is No Game—Or Is It?

Booktastic! (www.booktasticgame.com) recently announced a new fund-raising initiative for libraries. Booktastic! is a new literary board game designed for book lovers, families, and educators. The games, priced at $29.95, are being sold to help raise funds to support local schools and libraries. As of April 2005, libraries in six states are selling the game, including ten libraries in Virginia and the Friends of Branigan Memorial Library in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

The initiative was the brainchild of Janet Gorn, president of the Prince William County (Va.) Library Foundation. Gorn attests:

The game is a must for any library and game collection or as a source to raise funds for local libraries. Booktastic! combines the thorough knowledge of books, with one part Monopoly and one part trivia, creating an addictive recipe of fun for game enthusiasts and book lovers alike. Booktastic! is a terrific idea and concept and should be promoted.
Laine Keneller, president of Booktastic!, saw the game as a way to help schools and libraries with learning initiatives. “A key component of the game’s development was to ensure the design allowed people of all educational levels and ages to play,” she said “In doing so, we hoped the game could provide educational assistance for schools and libraries. To know the game can also provide financial assistance to schools and libraries is more than we could have hoped for.”

As of April 2005, the game is being sold in close to one hundred outlets throughout the United States. The game has also received coverage in USA Today, Publishers Weekly, The Christian Science Monitor, and The London Telegraph.

A children’s edition is slated for release in summer 2005. Keneller’s “goal for the children’s edition was to create a game that adults could play with children and open a dialog that maybe would not have happened otherwise and also (to create) a game that adults interested in children’s literature could play with other adults.” Here is a sneak preview of some of the potential Casual Questions, which have no wrong answers and are designed to encourage conversation:

- Is daydreaming a waste of time?
- Name one thing you would like to change about school.
- “Stella Luna” is the story of a lost baby bat that is taken in by a kind bird on the condition that Stella Luna will act like a bird and not a bat. Is it okay to ask someone to be something they are not?
- Do you have to read a book first before you decide you don’t like it?
- Do comic books belong in libraries?

Keneller writes, “I spent hundreds of hours in the Sacramento downtown library while doing my research for the game. I had to look up bestseller lists and author interviews on microfiche before I had the Internet at my house. I am very pleased to know that local libraries will benefit through Booktastic! I found this quote the other day in my research, and I agree wholeheartedly, ‘What is more important in a library than anything else—than everything else—is that it exists,’ Archibald MacLeish.”

The object of Booktastic! is to amass the most valuable collection of books and cash by buying and selling books. Players move around a quaint town square of bookstores to buy, sell, and trade books with money earned from correctly answering questions or sharing opinions prior to each turn. Open-ended questions are integrated in the game to encourage discussions about books and reading. The “books” in each “store” contain real-life information so players learn about noteworthy books, authors, and first edition values. For more information, visit www.booktasticgame.com, call 1-866-439-GAME, or e-mail sales@booktasticgame.com.

References

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3. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

Resources

Booktastic! www.booktasticgame.com
Groundspring.org, www.groundspring.org
JustGive, www.justgive.org
Network for Good, www.networkforgood.org
Paypal, www.paypal.com
Schoolpop, www.schoolpop.com
Shop for the Library, www.shopforthelibrary.net

The contributing editor of Bringing in the Money is Stephanie K. Gerding, EqualAccess Libraries Manager at Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records in Phoenix. Please direct all correspondence about the column to her at stephaniegerding@earthlink.net.

She is currently reading Love by Toni Morrison and A Theory of Everything by Ken Wilber.
Copyright Concerns

The Copyright Implications of Blogs

Carrie Russell

Weblogs, or “blogs” have gained increasing popularity over the past few years. The merit of some blog postings (those that have uncovered facts about recent events not covered by mainstream media) versus the credibility of blogs has been the focus of many discussions. This column will focus on the copyright status of blogs.

If the Web made it possible for anyone to be a publisher, blogs made it possible for anyone to publish their diaries and other personal musings. Regardless of the topic—be it “Friends of Pugs” or toxic-waste sites—unless otherwise noted by the copyright holder, all blogs are protected by copyright the moment they are created and posted on the Web. Why? Because all that is required for a work to be protected by copyright is originality, a little creativity, and the “fixing” of the work in a tangible medium that is perceptible by others, like words on a page and the flickering images of motion pictures on a projection screen. A blog post may be only a short sentence, but if it meets these slim requirements for copyright protection, it’s protected. In addition, the law no longer requires that works be registered with the U.S. Copyright Office to gain copyright protection. Indeed, the copyright notice (c in a circle, date, and name) is no longer necessary.

A blog post protected by copyright also includes all of the goodies that Congress grants to copyright holders—a long term of copyright protection (life of the author plus seventy years); the five exclusive rights of copyright that are the basis of the statutory monopoly we call copyright (the rights of reproduction, distribution, public display and performance, and the right to create derivative works based on the original); and the remedies of copyright infringement including statutory damages and fines and (with recent revisions of the law) criminal as well as civil penalties.

The copyright holder with these rights is the blogger who wrote the original post. Other bloggers who add commentary are likewise copyright holders of their posts. The entire blog, if considered a collected work of individual-protected posts, could also be a protected work as a whole, although the copyright ownership of that work is harder to discern. Without an outright assertion to the contrary, the logical copyright holder would be the person or persons who have established and maintained the blog. There are also the complications of coauthorship. Some blog posts may be so interwoven with other blog posts that more than one author creates the resulting work, complicating copyright ownership. On the other hand, one could also argue that when referring to other posts in a new post, bloggers are exercising fair use. Another possibility is that blogs by their very nature are implicit license agreements among the bloggers in that the reference and outright verbatim repetition of earlier posts is an accepted and expected practice.

Blogs provide examples of constant fair use in two ways. Because bloggers comment on other works, they are exercising a form of critique—one of the transformational uses that is an exemplar of fair use (Section 107). The other fair use is the omnipresent copying of earlier blog posts. Naturally, all kinds of copies are being made whenever the weblog is accessed by anyone’s computer and displayed on the screen. Distribution is wide since blogs are generally accessible to anyone on the Web. In the flexible, free-wheeling style of “blog land,” all works created for the blog are shared. No permission is sought to use another blog, that is, when you are blogging.

But let’s say you want to use posts for an article you are writing about blogs as aids in reference service—an article that is educational in nature in that it advances the learning of reference librarians and one you hope will be published in Public Libraries. Can you copy posts and include them in your article without prior authorization? Yes, if your use is a fair use. As you may remember, fair use is a statutory limitation of the exclusive rights of copyright holders. If your use is fair, you do not have to get prior permission from the copyright holder.

Fair use is based on four factors – the purpose of the use, the nature of the publication, the amount of the work you want to use, and the effect on the market for the work. Regarding the purpose of the use, we are asked to consider if the use is educational and nonprofit in nature or if the use is for commercial purposes. In our example, the use of the blog post in a new Public Libraries article is on the educational and nonprofit side of the spectrum, since authors of articles and column editors are not paid.

The nature of the publication we want to use could vary. Some blog posts are factual in nature and often relate to current events or news. Other posts are highly creative, leading to a more restricted, unfair-use determination. In addition, a post could include a video clip, photographs, audio, or anything that could possibly be posted on a Web site by a sophisticated user.

The amount factor is interesting in this case because if a post is fairly short in length, yet protected by copyright, one might need to use the entire work, an action generally considered unfair.

The market factor seems straightforward enough—there is no market effect. Of course, many blogs include advertisements and that revenue might be used to support blog maintenance and network costs, or perhaps even make a profit. But for the time being I would argue that the market effect is close to nonexistent.

Thus, in our example, copying discrete portions of blog entries of a factual nature for use in a factual article for the purpose of advancing knowledge, and with a not-for-profit motive is a fair use.
Now, let’s suppose that the post you wish to cite includes another copyrighted work, perhaps a paragraph from a recent newspaper article. Is this use fair? It is certainly less fair since the paragraph may have been obtained from a newspaper for which a subscription is required. Both print and many online newspapers are only available to paying subscribers so there would be a market effect. Of course, that market effect might be negligible and would have to be considered along side the other three factors of fair use to make a final determination.

In closing, remember the copyright status of blogs. They are protected works and carry with them all of the rewards and complications of copyright that makes copyright—at least for me—such a fascinating topic. Blog on!

Carrie Russell is the Copyright Specialist for the American Library Association’s Office for Information Technology Policy, Washington D.C.; crussell@alawash.org.

She just finished reading A Hole in the Universe by Mary McGarry Morris and is looking forward to reading a fun mystery, maybe in the Agatha Christie vein.

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**National Commission Seeks Expanded Health Information Role for Libraries**

**NCLIS Recommends Private-Public Partnership for Conducting Study**

The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) today called on President George W. Bush and Congressional leaders to support libraries as health information distribution centers. This specific role for libraries—already successful in many communities—will position libraries as the central resource for providing citizens with consumer health information, particularly when they require health information in a critical or unusual situation, and for helping citizens learn how to live a healthy lifestyle.

NCLIS’s recommendation is included in a transmittal letter addressed to President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Speaker Dennis Hastert of the U.S. House of Representatives. In the letter, which accompanies a Commission report describing award-winning health communication programs already in place in libraries, NCLIS chair Dr. Beth Fitzsimmons advised the president and Congress to “authorize the creation of a private/public partnership to study how libraries can be positioned to serve as their communities’ knowledge nexus for health information.”

The recommended partnership will be made up of leaders from government agencies concerned with healthcare, from the several healthcare professions, from the commercial sector, and from the library and information science profession. Its task will be to investigate how libraries can serve as citizen health information centers for their respective communities.

“Once the partnership completes its study,” Dr. Fitzsimmons said, “NCLIS will then work with the partnership to distribute authoritative guidelines for helping library managers set up consumer health information programs, if they are not already providing health information. And if they are, the guidelines will help them improve programs already in place. The goal is to establish libraries as the logical resource for consumer health information and for promoting a healthy lifestyle for all American citizens.”

NCLIS, created in 1970 to advise the president and Congress on national library and information policy, is seeking to strengthen the relevance of libraries in the lives of American citizens and has, in fact, chosen library relevance as one of its goals.

“I can’t think of a better way to do that than to encourage libraries to take the lead in providing consumer health information,” Dr. Fitzsimmons said. “In NCLIS’s awards initiative, we created a program to recognize libraries that have outstanding health communication programs. It was through that awards initiative—described in the report just delivered to the president and to Congress—that we were able to establish just how good libraries can be at providing consumer health information. Now we want to encourage more of them to do it.”

The report, which describes exceptional consumer health information programs provided by 37 libraries throughout America, is “Libraries and Health Communication: Model Programs in Health Information Provided by Libraries Throughout the Nation—The 2004 NCLIS Blue Ribbon Consumer Health Information Recognition Awards for Libraries.” It can be viewed at www.nclis.gov/info/ModelProgramsReport04-19-05.pdf.

In the report, NCLIS makes the point that libraries are a suitable and natural resource for health information. From NCLIS’s perspective, libraries that deliver consumer health information are simply building on what they already do well. In all communities, libraries provide a variety of consumer information to citizens, and the nation’s vast network of libraries of all types (some 122,000 public, academic, government, specialized, and research libraries) is a trusted and respected source of information. Providing consumer health information and encouraging lifestyle improvements fits comfortably into that consumer information role. When acted upon, the commission’s recommendation to the president and Congress will benefit the American people by encouraging libraries to continue to provide information that is sound, authoritative, and for the common good.
A+ Partners in Education
Linking Libraries to Education for a Flourishing Future

Valerie J. Gross

In September 2002, Howard County Library and the Howard County Public School System in Columbia, Maryland, announced the formation of A+ Partners in Education, a formalized partnership designed to position the public library as a full partner in the education of the county’s 48,000 public school students. The partnership promotes scholarship, assists with eliminating student achievement gaps, and expands the academic opportunities for each student. The partnership also heightens the visibility and importance of the library and school media centers, shapes the role of librarians as educators, links libraries to a commonly understood definition of education, and builds the next generation of library customers and supporters, ensuring the future of the library.

Few years back, a young journalist called me, eager to ask questions for a feature article. As the director of the Howard County Library (HCL), I was happy to oblige, and spoke with her for more than an hour about A+ Partners in Education, a newly implemented initiative between HCL and Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). Nearly three years later, I can still hear her concluding comments: “Wow! I grew up in Howard County. I wish all of this had been in place to help me when I was in school!”

In fact, much of it had been available—she simply had not realized it. And it is likely that her teachers and parents had not viewed the library as playing a major role in education either. Yet we, and most public libraries, have provided academic assistance that supports school curricula for years. Indeed, all library services and programs fall under the umbrella of lifelong education.

A+ Partners in Education capitalizes on the value the community places in education and serves as a catalyst to change public perceptions of the library. We repackaged traditional services for students and enhanced our overall program with innovative ideas and cutting-edge components. A comprehensive network of communication serves to connect the library with the entire school system. If our young journalist were starting school today, I am confident she would view HCL as an integral aspect of her twelve years of required education.

Now in its third year, the partnership has resulted in extraordinary gains for both the schools and the library. The schools benefit from students’ improved academic performance. For the library, the partnership augments visibility and links libraries to a commonly understood definition of education and its indispensability, which we can then expand to our services for all ages. At the same time, the partnership is leveraging public funding, making school media center and public library jobs more rewarding, and developing new generations of library customers who will value and support the library.

The Essence of the Partnership

The overall essence of the partnership can be summarized with the example of a student, “Sara,” who is just entering kindergarten. When Sara’s parents register her for school in March, they will be asked to complete a HCL card application along with school forms. Sara will receive her new library card in the mail, along with an incentive to register for the Summer Reading Program and an invitation to “Kindergarten Here We Come!” at her liaison library. Sara and her parents will hear library staff speak at Sara’s Back to School night. In October, Sara’s class will take a field trip to the library as part of the full-day kindergarten curriculum. Throughout the year, Sara will experience library staff presentations in her classroom, and she will return to the library for additional curriculum-related field trips arranged by her teacher. Sara, her parents, and her siblings will have

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an opportunity to attend family night at the library hosted by her school’s Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Through the schools, Sara will learn about extracurricular library services and children’s programs; for example, children’s books in Chinese or author programs featuring popular writers such as Linda Sue Park, Lemony Snicket, and Jack Gantos.

As years progress and homework mounts, Sara will learn that in addition to guidance from her school’s media specialist, she can receive assistance from professionals at the public library, who will be able to plan ahead for Sara’s projects thanks to Assignment Alerts her teachers forward to HCL. Sara will learn that her library card provides her access to full-text databases available from school, home, or the library. To help her with specific homework questions, Sara will learn that she has access to a personal online tutor—for free—from 2 P.M. to midnight, seven days a week, in the core subjects of math, science, social studies, and English. If Sara does not have Internet access at home, she will be able to use any of the library’s 325 public-access computers during prime homework time (afternoon, evenings, and weekends) and that word-processing programs are also available at each branch for projects that must be typed.

The Partnership In the Making

Before the A+ Partnership, HCL had worked with twelve of the county’s sixty-nine schools at varying levels. Activities included setting up library tables at back-to-school nights, periodic library card drives, and taking library programs into the schools. Some schools also brought students into the library. Nevertheless, relations were less than ideal with many schools, where it was our perception that there was little interest in working together. In addition, any communication, brochure, or flyer we sent to the schools for dissemination required individual approval, delaying the process and chilling outreach efforts.

We began imagining a countywide partnership where working relations and communication with media specialists, principals, faculty, and staff would be ideal, where students would receive library cards through the schools, and where library staff would be viewed by the schools as adjunct faculty. We pictured a world where students, faculty, and the community would view the library as critical to education.

After securing the support of the superintendent of schools, library staff, media specialists, and key school administrators met with us to begin plans. We set out to convince the schools (especially media specialists) that this program would supplement and enhance existing school and media center programs, and that we could implement the partnership with our existing staffs and budgets. A handful of ideas blossomed, and over the course of one year, we shaped the partnership’s vision, mission, and objectives. Each of the county’s schools was assigned a liaison public library, along with a staff member responsible for regular communication.

After the signing of an official agreement, public library staff met individually with principals, assistant principals, media specialists, and reading specialists at all sixty-nine schools to explain how the collaboration would enhance student achievement. Each meeting generated more enthusiasm. One hurried principal, who said she only had thirty minutes for the meeting, was still envisioning ideas two hours later. Another principal, who initially did not want to meet, requested one thousand library card applications for her school. She also said she would require students to use the library for certain assignments. The designated library’s branch manager and partnership liaison (a children’s or teen specialist) represented HCL at each of these meetings.

A+ Vision

The A+ Partners in Education vision promotes scholarship and expands the educational opportunities for Howard County’s public school students, providing each student the best possible chance of overall academic success.

The mission includes ensuring that every student has and uses a HCL card and developing programs that encourage reading and assist with the completion of school assignments. The initiative applies a comprehensive approach to working with the schools, providing for a solid, unified, county-wide program.

In short, we are taking the public library into all schools, and we are bringing the schools—students and faculty—into the public library to assist with eliminating achievement gaps and improving grades. Working from school, at the library or from home, all students have the same access to databases, online tutoring, and professional assistance with projects and assignments. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the revised SAT test that includes an essay component, this initiative is especially important, as schools are focusing on improving student test scores, especially in reading and writing.

Key Components

The following components of the partnership play a major role in its success.

Library Cards

Students receive library cards through school registration. School personnel place public library card applications in kindergarten and new student registration packets, then collect and send the completed forms to the library. Library staff mail the cards to the students’ homes. We have processed more than 14,000 library cards through the partnership, as well as 800 A+ Teacher cards, a special program for teachers that we instituted. While this systematic approach will eventually end the need for library card drives, until such time, the schools are coordinating drives, with many principals aiming for 100 percent participation.

Sometimes we get additional help. The grandfather of a third grader reported that a librarian had visited his grandson’s class, asking how many of the children had a library card. All students, except his grandson, raised their hands. Hearing that his grandson was the only one who did not have a library card, the grandfather gave all of his grandchildren library cards as gifts. When asked how old his grandchildren were, he replied, “Five weeks to eleven years old. I guess I should start the little one now—I don’t want her to not have something that all children have.”

Commitment from Both Organizations

Commitment from both organizations contributes to the success of the partnership. One of the strongest indications of the commitment and value the schools place in the partnership occurred this past year. The school system decided to add an annual field trip to the library to
its kindergarten curriculum. In support of this decision, HCPSS superintendent Sydney L. Cousin said, “Establishing this academic connection with the library at the beginning of each child’s twelve years of education can only further one of our major goals: bridging achievement gaps among students.”

Assignment Alerts

Teachers communicate with media specialists and library staff about upcoming assignments through online Assignment Alerts. One alert informed staff that 117 fourth graders would be assigned a Native American folklore to read. Advance notice allowed staff to bolster the branch’s collection with copies from other branches. One hundred books were checked out to the students. Another alert allowed preparation time to assist seventh graders with a history project. A student wrote, “Thank you for helping me receive an ‘A’ on my Cleisthenes project. Without your assistance, I would have spent twice the time getting half the work done.”

Online Tutors

Through the library’s Web site, students have access to online tutors—for free—from 2 P.M. to midnight, seven days a week. Tutors—who are graduate students, retired teachers, or teachers desiring supplemental income—assist with homework questions in math, science, English, and social studies. Students also may request homework help en Español. Students key their school, grade, and library card number into a computer, which launches a virtual classroom. Although students log on for tutoring in all available subjects, most log on for assistance in algebra, geometry, calculus, trigonometry, and chemistry. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from the nearly 20,000 sessions recorded since September 2002, as evidenced by the following sampling of comments:

- “Excellent tutor; great service. I’m glad my library is offering it!”
- “This was very helpful in the proofreading of my essay.”
- “A great resource when you’re stuck on something.”
- “[My online tutor was the] best math teacher I ever had.”
- “Never, ever, stop this. My mom does not remember algebra and I would be lost without this.”

In true partnership spirit, the schools share in the expense of providing this service. Assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction Robert O. Glascock stated, “I truly believe that the more we can engage kids around libraries, the stronger their overall education will be. Online homework assistance through the library plays an important part in accelerating student success as we work toward the goal of eliminating achievement gaps among student groups.”

Full-text Databases

Online tutoring complements two other remote-access services available through the library’s Web site. Available 24/7, students search full-text databases for their research needs (for example, Encyclopedia Americana, Groves Dictionary of Art, Biography Resource Center, Access Science, 125,000 full-text poems, and thousands of newspapers and magazines), and use AskUsNow!, Maryland’s state-wide virtual reference service.

Two-Way Communication

Library liaisons place high priority on maintaining ongoing communication with their counterpart school liaisons. School liaisons disseminate partnership information to the school’s faculty and administration, who, in turn, communicate the information to students and parents through school newsletters, Web sites, meetings, and classroom announcements. Numerous principals send e-mail to their entire faculty, emphasizing the importance of students capitalizing on the partnership, especially library databases and online tutoring assistance. Principals ask teachers to give extra credit to students who use library resources and encourage them to forward assignment alert forms to the library. In addition, the A+ Advisory Committee, comprised of school and library staff, meets monthly to continue cultivating close working relations, review progress, and discuss new ideas. We also keep board members at both the library and the schools informed through regular updates, and library staff serve on the school system’s district planning team, media advisory committee, and technology advisory committee, which keeps the partnership visible among key school administrators.

Publicity

Publicity continues to build momentum. We promote the partnership through public speaking, television segments, newspaper articles, library publications, school newsletters, and conference presentations. (At a PTA council meeting last year, the audience of PTA presidents and school representatives seized every last packet of materials I had brought along the instant I finished speaking.)

At the conclusion of the first and second years of the partnership, we hosted celebrations that were attended by elected officials at federal, state, and local levels; library and school board members; community dignitaries; and leaders and representatives from the Maryland Department of Education and the American Library Association. The events featured presentations from school media specialists and library staff who shared stories illustrating the benefits of the partnership. At this year’s celebration, Nancy Grasmick, Maryland state superintendent of schools, described the partnership as “enhancing educational excellence.” Irene Padilla, Maryland superintendent for libraries, announced a $25,000 continuation grant in addition to the initial $52,000 grant for the development of the partnership during its second year, emphasizing the importance of producing an A+ Tool Kit for the benefit of other public libraries wishing to replicate the program.

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more than 150,000 students, faculty, and parents since the partnership’s inception. The first year of the partnership, we said “yes” to nearly every program idea that teachers and media specialists brought to the table. The second year, we developed a catalog of programs that outlined available library staff presentations from which teachers could choose to supplement their courses, all of which correlated to elementary, middle, and high school curricula. Programs, which we present either at the schools or in the library, include Computer Resources, Geography to Go, Spirit of America, Middle East Cultural Enrichment, and Law Day Mock Trials. In addition, we offer book talks and story times (such as Multicultural Medley and Dr. Seuss on the Loose) relating to ongoing themes during the school year. Responses from media specialists and teachers to these programs have been overwhelmingly positive. The schools value the lineup of choices, and library staff appreciate that the catalog provides variety within parameters to facilitate consistent quality and adequate preparation time.

Library staff are frequently invited to present customized partnership programs for teachers. For instance, when speaking to English instructional leaders, we focused on assistance available to students working on research papers at both the media centers and at the public library; they were so impressed that we have been invited back to present the same program for all high school English teachers at their in-service day!

We aim to be responsive to teachers’ needs. When teachers at an elementary school reported they were having difficulty motivating third-grade students to complete their curriculum’s twenty-five-book reading requirement, we developed a reading game as an incentive. The game featured the school’s mascot walking through the woods, encountering books along a path. As they read, students received prizes. Library staff visited the class, booktalking and bringing books the students could borrow. The school also brought the class to the library. As a result, all students are now on target for their mandated reading requirement. This program will be made available to all elementary schools in the county. The game board can be modified to feature the school’s mascot, and the liaison branch library can provide ongoing assistance through booktalks and visits.

Also in response to teacher requests, we initiated an A+ Teacher Library Card. The card gives teachers who are employed in Howard County schools special borrowing privileges for materials used in preparing lessons or assisting students with assignments. Teachers may borrow materials for six weeks and renew materials once; they are given a ten-day grace period for fines. The cards were an immediate success. In the past eight months, we issued eight hundred A+ Teacher cards—including two hundred the first day of teacher orientation!

We are especially pleased about the increased opportunities we have to connect with parents. We now are invited to speak to parents about the partnership as part of the program agenda at First Day of School and Back-to-School Night meetings. In addition, family nights at the library sponsored by the schools’ PTAs provide opportunities to
inform parents of the academic support the library provides for their students. While classroom presentations and PTA events grant us opportunities to connect with students and parents, we have also implemented the following programs.

**Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers**

In partnership with Fidos for Freedom, the schools, and the Friends of HCL, the library offers Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers (DEAR). Third graders visit the library on Saturday mornings to read to a loving, nonjudgmental audience: therapy dogs. One parent wrote, “My daughter was a shy reader who blossomed into a confident one. She fell in love with ‘her’ dog and believed that the dogs needed to be read to as much as she needed to read.” Students begin the program reading two to five levels below their target level and usually read at or above grade level upon completion. Fidos for Freedom won Howard County’s Community Organization of the Year award for this joint program with the library.

**Book Club for Boys**

We initiated a successful program for middle-school boys, Book Club for Boys. With statistics showing that boys score lower on standardized reading and writing tests than girls, it is especially important to facilitate programs intended to get boys excited about reading. The boys meet weekly after school. Mystery books are the most popular.

**A+ Summer Reading Program Promotional Video**

Our jointly produced A+ summer reading program promotional videos now bolster the in-person summer reading marketing we do each year in May. Library staff, school faculty, and students (who receive class credits for the projects) write and produce three videos—one each for elementary, middle, and high school students. The Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Library Development and Services funded this year’s videos and distributed them to library systems throughout the state.

**Spelling Bee**

The new HCL Spelling Bee is inspiring students to improve their spelling, increase their vocabularies, learn word etymology, and develop correct English usage. Winners from the forty bees held in fall 2004 at public schools, private schools, and home school associations participated in HCL’s Spelling Bee on March 18 before an audience of 800 people. The overall champion represented Harford County at the National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., all expenses paid. Sponsored by The Baltimore Sun, the HCL Spelling Bee is organized as a regional bee under the rules of the Scripps-Howard National Spelling Bee.

**English for Speakers of Other Languages**

To assist with bridging achievement gaps among English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, we expanded our outreach to the ESOL community, coordinating numerous tours and introducing library resources and programs to these students and their parents. The schools’ ESOL office translates library card applications, brochures, and other library publications into the top four languages spoken in the county: Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Urdu. This past year, the summer reading program game board was translated into three languages. We also are targeting schools with high ESOL populations for on-site summer reading program registration. Additionally, we visit Newcomers classes (high school courses for first-generation immigrants) every two weeks, bringing books at appropriate reading levels on topics suggested by the teacher. The classes also visit the library, and interested students participate in an evening program at the library with their parents. Teachers say the increased contact with the library has resulted in these students reading more and achieving better English skills.

**Measurable Outcomes**

While principals, teachers, and students have credited the partnership with contributing to improved grades, higher test scores, and increased reading levels, it is important to produce measurable outcomes that support these assertions. To this end, four schools have agreed to serve as models for purposes of evaluation. Serving as a model school involves a greater commitment on the part of the schools’ principals and media specialists to work closely with the library. Teachers submit assignment alerts allowing the library to measure the benefits of having staff prepared to assist with specific projects. Library staff is conducting pre- and post- surveys of students and faculty to find out how library use has changed since beginning the partnership. Measurable outcomes will support the assertion that the partnership helps bridge achievement gaps, increase reading, and assist in improving grades and test scores. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) funded the outcome-based evaluations we are using.

**A+ On the Rise**

As the partnership progressed, library staff offered a number of presentations to the library community. We talked about the partnership’s successes at the 2004 PLA conference, at a 2003 meeting of the YALSA executive board, and at numerous Maryland events, which led to inquiries from libraries across the state and across the country.

At PLA’s conference, HCL led a session called “Changing Perceptions: Public Libraries As Partners in Education.” One of the attendees wrote, “I think the time spent at your program was worth the price of admission to PLA all by itself.” The Wadsworth (Ohio) Public Library has launched its own A+ initiative, Director C. Allen Nichols confirms the remarkable benefits of the program, noting, “We will not likely discover a partnership that provides more benefits for our efforts than A+ Partners in Education.”

Commenting on changed perceptions, he added:

Now that Wadsworth Public Library is connected with education in this visible way, we are seeing far more students and parents using library resources. Just as important, the general public is beginning to view library staff as educators and is placing a higher value in the library and its contributions to quality of life in the community.

Charles County (Md.) Public Library director Emily Ferren, who is in the process of implementing a comprehensive partnership with the schools, observed:

Teachers, students and parents appreciate the variety of library programs that also reinforce the school curriculum. Even though our partnership is still in its infancy, we are already reaping the benefits of strengthened relations with the
Extraordinary Gains

Howard County has seen extraordinary gains for both the schools and the library. The schools have acquired access to research materials, databases, online tutors, and an additional band of adjunct faculty (library staff) who provide homework assistance to students. Schools also benefit from the training and programs library staff provide for teachers and students. The partnership expands the resources available to media specialists, who now view the library as an extension of their services. Branch library hours extend student research and homework assistance time into evenings, weekends, and school vacations.

Although library professionals also care about more complete homework, better projects, improved test scores, and increased reading, there are other significant gains for school media centers and public libraries—and for the library profession in general. School media centers and media specialists have been recognized time and again since the launch of the partnership as an essential component of students’ overall education. Carol Fritts, coordinator of media and educational technology for HCPSS, recommends the partnership to schools.

“In addition, 95 percent of Howard County residents now hold library cards—more than 10,000 cards have been issued through the partnership. While many library systems across the country experienced budget cuts in 2004, Howard County government raised taxes to support education, the definition of which included libraries. The tax increase funded three additional full-time positions at HCL and an 8 percent salary increase for library staff. County executive James N. Robey justified the tax increase by focusing on the need to fund the county’s school and library systems. He stated, “the tax increase is vital to keep Howard County’s schools and libraries top-notch.”

Since the launching of the A+ Partnership, HCL has won the Howard County Chamber of Commerce’s Non-Profit Business of the Year Award and the school system selected the library for its Accelerating Academic Achievement (Triple A) Partnership award. Additionally, one of the strongest and most visible statements of the impact the partnership has had in linking the library with education came when Hope Chase, HCL’s head of youth services, was chosen as Educator of the Year by the Howard County Chamber of Commerce. For the first time ever, the Chamber of Commerce allowed public library educators to be nominated for this prestigious award, along with educators from public schools and the community college.

The most remarkable benefit the partnership brings to libraries is the highly visible link to education, shaping an overall image that libraries are an integral part of the education process. This is important because people understand and value education—even people who have never set foot in a library. Being linked with education can only further elevate our profession. Our jobs are more satisfying because more people understand what we do, and we gain more recognition for what we have been contributing all along. When linked with education as most people define it, libraries and librarians become more valued in the eyes of the community, assisting us as we advocate for increased funding.

A much longer-term benefit is the way the partnership is building a solid base of customers. If students, as part of their education, use and value the library, we will be constantly building the next generation of library customers and supporters, who will link all that we do to an expanded definition of education, assuring libraries an important role in the future.

References and Notes

1. For further details regarding how the partnership began, the planning process, and struggles along the way, see also “A+ Partners in Education: Positioning Libraries As a Cornerstone in the Education Process,” Children and Libraries 1, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 27–31.
5. Ibid.
Contemporary Forces That Supported the Founding of the Boston Public Library

Grace-Ellen McCrann

Occasionally a single person can be pinpointed as the primary reason for the establishment of a major institution (such as the founding of Rockefeller University by John D. Rockefeller, Alfred Nobel and the Nobel Foundation, the libraries of Andrew Carnegie), but most major institutions grow out of a combination of people and circumstances. As the Boston Public Library begins the second half of its second century, this paper examines the combination of contemporary social and cultural forces that collectively supported the founding of America’s first truly public library.

Eighteen-forty-eight was a very busy year . . . Europe was full of revolutions, John Stuart Mill published Principles of Political Economy, John Quincy Adams died, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the first Women's Suffrage Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. It was on March 18, 1848, that the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives approved legislation authorizing Boston “to establish and maintain a public library . . . provided, however, that no appropriation for the said library shall exceed the sum of five thousand dollars in any one year.”

Social Conditions Influencing the Establishment of Boston Public Library

The existing literature on the founding of the library can pretty much be divided into two camps: those who see the establishment of the library as a humanistic continuation of “The Flowering of New England” and those who see the library’s founding as an attempt by the elite to control the lower classes. This paper concludes that both approaches were represented in the process, as well as other ingredients including geography, urbanization, wealth, literacy, growth of the publishing industry, municipal self-image, a view of libraries as the extension of education, social relationships, and good old-fashioned stubbornness.

Settlement Patterns

The library movement was successful in New England in general and in Boston in particular for a number of reasons; two of them were geography and settlement patterns. Early New England immigrants were more likely to settle in towns and villages than early immigrants to the southern colonies, where many settlers came looking for personal land. The South certainly had some towns, but sizable settlements were more likely to be in the Northeast. John Palfrey speaks of the New England population in 1665 as probably numbering “from 40,000 to 45,000 English people ... They inhabited 90 towns, of which four were in Rhode Island, 12 in Plymouth, 22 in Connecticut and the rest in Massachusetts.”

Outside of New England, Virginia was the other major early settlement in what would be the United States. In discussing the Virginia colony of the early eighteenth century (thirty-five to forty years later than Palfrey’s New England), Valerie Ann Polino describes Virginia as “a colony with few towns and no cities.”

Because New England town settlers were more likely to live in physical proximity to each other, they could much more easily support the establishment of public institutions than could even the most wealthy individual living in relative isolation in the South.

A well-known example of a very early New England public institution is the Boston Latin School, founded in 1635. Boston Latin’s first schoolmaster was given thirty acres of land, while a year later, the second schoolmaster, Daniel Maude, received a garden plot. The Boston town records for 1636 includes “a list of subscriptions of all the principal inhabitants of the town who gave from four shillings up to ten pounds each towards Mr. Maude’s maintenance.”

Geography

Another factor favoring growth was Boston’s deep-water port. The importance of the port of Boston in establishing it as
an early regional center cannot be overestimated. The port represented trade, commerce, transportation, and income. The land surrounding Boston is also reasonably flat, a geographic advantage in a period when inland transportation was difficult at best. Boston quickly became a focal point for a region that today loosely covers nine modern counties—Suffolk, Essex, Middlesex, Worcester, Norfolk, Bristol, Plymouth, and Barnstable in Massachusetts and Rockingham County, New Hampshire.6

Population
These natural, physical advantages helped Boston grow rapidly. The 1810 U.S. Census records give Boston’s population as 33,250, almost three times as large as Salem, the next-largest town in the region. Salem’s population that year was 12,613.7 By 1830, Boston had almost doubled its size to 61,392, while Salem, still the second-largest town, only added a little over a thousand people to bring its count up to 13,895.8 Another fairly dramatic 1830 comparison between Boston and Salem was in the evaluation conducted that year by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The valuation counted 1,306 shops in Boston, almost 1,000 more merchants than the 327 shops recorded in Salem.9 By 1850, the textile town of Lowell had supplanted Salem as number two in the region with a population of 33,383, but Boston had more than doubled its size yet again to a total population of 136,881.10

Economics
The sheer volume of people in Boston generated wealth, and the trade and services that flowed between Boston and the rest of the region just added to that wealth. This economic prosperity is important because of what it enabled individuals and the city itself to do. An individual, or a municipality, which is wealthy enough to not have to spend every last available penny on rock-bottom necessities, has a certain amount of disposable income available to spend on other items. The Boston region could— and did—generate enough revenue for the city to support a library.

Literacy
While it would be possible for a well-to-do individual or a group to be financially capable of buying enough books to start a library, for a public library to be successful, money (while always useful) is not enough. A library has to have patrons who are able to read—it depends on a literate patron population. At the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill Monument in 1825, Daniel Webster spoke of the era as being an “age of knowledge” and cited “the general progress of knowledge” throughout Europe and America as one of the most significant events of the 1775–1825 period.”11 The next year, Joseph Story gave a Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard and spoke of “changes . . . into the very structure of society,” identifying the two most major changes as “the general diffusion of knowledge” and “a universal love of reading.”12

In 1827, the Commonwealth passed the Massachusetts High School Law requiring every “town or district within this Commonwealth” with a population of at least “fifty families or householders” to establish and support a school:

The smallest areas were to have a teacher or teachers of good morals to instruct children in orthography [vocabulary and spelling], reading, writing, English grammar, geography, arithmetic and good behavior. If a town had 500 families they were to add the history of the United States, bookkeeping by single entry, geometry, surveying [and] algebra, while a district with 4,000 inhabitants would add on the Latin and Greek languages, history, rhetoric and logic.13

Publishing
While libraries need a literate population to be successful, they also need continued access to new reading material. Printing technology had advanced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries with the invention of papermaking machines that could produce paper in a wide, continuous roll. These new machines were in common use by the 1830s and made the printing of publications both cheaper and faster than the old single-sheet production method.14 The New England region of the time was also known for its famous authors, among whom were Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Emily Dickinson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Louisa May Alcott.

While Boston’s position as a transportation hub made it possible for printed material to arrive from almost anywhere, many of these well-known local writers were published by Boston’s own publishing house, Ticknor and Fields. (The firm underwent several name changes and has been known since 1880 as Houghton Mifflin.) Ticknor and Fields were Robert Browning’s American publishers and also published The Atlantic Monthly and The North American Review.

However, as dominant as this firm was, there were many other contemporary publishers in and around Boston. The truth of that is seen in the 1850 census, which shows 107 periodicals were published in Boston that year.15 Given the above-quoted 1850 population of Boston of 136,881, that means there was a periodical published for every 1,279 people, a rather amazing statistic. No wonder the nineteenth century Boston author and publisher Samuel Goodrich described the period as, “this era of literary affluence, almost amounting to surfeit.”16

Self-Image
Another less tangible condition also contributed to the ideal conditions of nineteenth-century Boston. There is an old rhyme whose authorship is debated; supposedly it is based on a toast given at a 1905 Harvard alumni dinner. Its words, in several variations, are known to every New England schoolchild: “Boston, dear Boston, the land of the bean and the cod, where the Lowells speak only to Cabots, and the Cabots speak only to God.” Indeed, this rhyme is still being used to describe Boston .17 Whether it is the version where the Lowells are speaking only to the Cabots, or the one where the Cabots are speaking only to the Lodges, the rhyme describes people who think well of themselves.

Nineteenth-century citizens of the Boston region did think well of themselves, and they often compared Boston to Edinburgh, a much-admired contemporary center of learning and culture. Ralph Waldo Emerson said of Boston, “I do not speak with any fondness, but the language of coldest history, when I say that Boston commands attention as the town which was appointed in the destiny of nations to lead the civilization of North America.”18 Another major figure of the period was Daniel Webster. Van Wyck Brooks describes Webster’s view of Massachusetts and the power...
of his oratory: “When he spoke of the Bay State and Bunker Hill, of Plymouth Rock, Lexington and Concord, one felt that to belong to Massachusetts was the noblest privilege of history.”

Other Libraries
Libraries certainly existed in America before 1848; two of America’s largest were in greater Boston, the Harvard College Library and the Library of the Boston Athenaeum. Several early municipal libraries had also been founded in New England, the Bingham Library for Youth in Salisbury, Connecticut (1810), a town-funded juvenile library in Lexington, Massachusetts (1827), and the Peterborough Town Library in New Hampshire (1833). These municipal libraries were supported by public funding and open to all town residents, regardless of income or status, meeting the two commonly accepted conditions for a library to be considered public.

The early nineteenth century also saw private libraries owned by well-to-do individuals and a number of small, commercial circulating libraries often run by merchants (booksellers, millinery shops, and so forth) as a sideline to their main business. These circulating libraries were subscription libraries, and anyone who could afford the subscription could join. Boston’s first circulating library was John Mein’s combination bookstore and circulating library, which opened in 1765. Mein was an Edinburgh bookseller who had emigrated to Boston. He opened his library with a collection of twelve hundred books “in most branches of polite literature, arts & sciences.” Patrons got one book at a time but since subscribers had to pick up their books in person, Mein allowed rural subscribers to pay twice the fee and get two books at once.

Various societies, such as the Boston Athenaeum, also maintained libraries, but access to these society collections were normally restricted to members. A number of society libraries would occasionally allow nonmembers with compatible scholarly interests to consult their collections but this did not happen regularly.

People Influencing the Establishment of BPL
Favorable social conditions helped create a hospitable environment for a flourishing Boston library, but all the advantageous conditions in the world would have been for naught if it were not for the individual personalities who transformed enthusiasm and ideas into reality.

Alexandre Vattemare
Into this atmosphere of early libraries, positive self-image, favorable geography, literacy, and a flourishing publishing industry arrived in 1841 a somewhat unusual Frenchman named Alexandre Vattemare. Well-known in Europe, not as a scholar or an author but as a ventriloquist, Vattemare’s off-stage life was consumed with a grand scheme for the international exchange of books between cities and governments. But there was no great public library in Boston, or anywhere else in America for that matter, that could house such a gift.

At a meeting at Boston’s Mercantile Library on April 24, 1841, Vattemare proposed that most, if not all, of Boston’s libraries combine themselves into one grand institution for the benefit of the public. He appealed to Boston’s sense of itself as a cultural center and as a place where such a scheme could succeed. A marvelous public speaker, Vattemare’s theatrical background gifted him with the nineteenth-century version of charisma, and his reception was enthusiastic. A second meeting in early May was chaired by Boston Mayor Jonathan Chapman and a committee to investigate a library was formed. Its members included such prominent Bostonians as Charles Francis Adams, grandson of one signer of the Declaration of Independence and former president (John Adams); Dr. Walter Channing, grandson of another signer (William Ellery of Rhode Island); and Josiah Quincy Jr., the son of one Boston mayor and a man who would soon become mayor himself.

The whole idea sounded wonderful at the time, and fifteen of Boston’s libraries were asked their opinion of the plan. This is the point at which things began to become unstuck. A few of the smaller libraries were willing to come to some sort of arrangement, but most of the libraries were either totally uninterested or at best expressed lukewarm interest with reservations. Vattemare had gone back to Europe, and without his personality driving the scheme, the idea was put aside.

In 1843, Paris, at Vattemare’s urging, sent some fifty books to Boston as a gift, while in 1847 Boston received a second gift, also from Paris and prompted by Vattemare, of one hundred additional volumes for a nonexistent library. These gifts finally caused the Boston City Council to create its own committee to look into the question of a library.

Josiah Quincy
By this time, the same Josiah Quincy, who had been on the 1841 committee, was now Boston’s mayor and anonymously

Female Literacy

Given that the nineteenth century was a period in which women enjoyed few rights, it is interesting to read reading and printing historians Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray on female literacy in that era. “Virtually all of nearly thirty collections of Boston-area family papers examined at various repositories contained references to women reading political news or otherwise demonstrating a consciousness of events.” In writing to her sister in 1837 Hannah Lowell Jackson said, “Father, you know, is not in the habit of talking about public affairs, in his family & therefore, Mother, Catherine, Ellen & I depend on the papers for information. . . . The Transcript used to be the favorite paper . . . now, however we prefer the long columns of politics in the other papers.”

And as early as the June 27, 1793 issue of the Independent Chronicle, Joshua Thomas acknowledged early New England female literacy in the advertisement for his new “Circulating Library.” “Great pains will be taken to render this LIBRARY worthy of the patronage of the Ladies of Boston and its vicinity.”

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offered a personal gift of $5,000 to begin the funding of a new library, under the condition that an additional $10,000 was to be raised. By the end of 1847, a joint special committee of the council finally recommended the establishment of a library, though they did not want to spend any money, proposing instead to stock the library solely with gift books. By January 1848 the political landscape had changed, and Quincy convinced a new city council to ask the Massachusetts legislature to grant Boston the power to “establish and maintain a public library.”23 The legislature did just that in March, but there were still no actual arrangements as to how the library would be organized and financed. Quincy was himself a trustee of the Athenaeum and tried to negotiate an agreement whereby the Athenaeum library would become the basis of a new Boston Public Library, but the Athenaeum’s proprietors turned down the proposal.

John Jacob Astor

Two separate events combined to finally jumpstart the library plan. The first event was John Jacob Astor’s death in 1848; he left the New York the then-enormous sum of $400,000 to establish and maintain a library. There was certainly a genteel rivalry between Boston and New York, and the thought of Boston’s economic and cultural rival opening a library before the city established its own library did not suit the opinion of Bostonians had of themselves as cultural leaders. To add insult to possible injury, the man chosen to head the new Astor Library was a Harvard man, Joseph Green Cogswell. The second event was a third visit from Vattemare in 1849, bringing yet another fifty gift volumes from Paris. The first two gifts had been languishing upstairs in Boston City Hall; this third gift was just an embarrassment of riches.

There had been some money raised in 1850 for a testimonial gift for Mayor John Prescott Bigelow, but he suggested that the funds should be used instead to establish a fund for the library. Energized by the spectre of New York’s proposed Astor Library, Bostonians began to donate books and whole collections to the still-nonexistent library. These donations helped flesh out the scope of the collection. The two hundred gift books that had been received from Paris were a bit of an odd lot, including a Statistical Map of the Sewers of Paris, Regulations Concerning the Sale of Spirituous Drinks and a Report . . . for the Organization of Slaughter-Houses and the Regulations of Butchereries.24 While the gifts had been well-intended, these items were of somewhat limited appeal in Boston, and the new donations that began to arrive better reflected local interests.

Edward Everett

One of the most significant early gifts was the collection of public documents and state papers offered by Edward Everett. Everett, who was to become a prime mover in the founding of the library, was a friend of Joseph Cogswell and George Ticknor. All three attended the University of Gottingen together. A former president of Harvard, a Harvard professor of Greek literature, a former governor of Massachusetts, a former minister to the court of St. James and a congressman, Everett was also a friend of Daniel Webster and succeeded him as secretary of state in 1832. During his years of federal service, Everett had carefully collected the documents of both houses of Congress and had them bound at his own expense. When he offered this collection to the new library, the total number of items amounted to about one thousand volumes.

George Ticknor

It has been said that the value of Everett’s collection went beyond the worth of the books themselves, that the real significance of this donation was that the gift prompted Everett’s close friend Ticknor to become involved in the active planning for the new library.

Vattemare was not the first person to propose a public library for Boston. That distinction belongs to Ticknor, a one-time Smith Professor of the French and German Languages at Harvard and very much a Boston insider. A trustee of the Boston Athenaeum and a close friend of Webster, Ticknor himself owned one of the largest personal libraries in New England if not in America. He contributed money to the 1848 purchase of the bulk of George Washington’s library in order to present the collection to the Athenaeum. Ticknor had raised the possibility of a Boston public library as early as 1826, but at the time could not raise enough interest in the idea.

While there are many characters in the overall scenario of BPL’s founding, Ticknor, from this point forward, was probably the most important. He wrote to Everett, “I have seen with much gratification . . . particularly in your last letter on the subject, that you interest yourself in the establishment of a public library in Boston.”25 Ticknor was a man supportive of and interested in libraries, learning, and books. Well-read, well-travelled, well-educated, and well-connected, Ticknor was at the social and cultural heart of mid-nineteenth-century Boston.

A web of friendships, social, and family relationships characterized the Boston of this period. The names that pass through the story of Boston’s library, some of whom were major contemporary players in the life of the city, pretty much all knew each other. Many of them had gone to school together, they belonged to the same societies, and they often married each other’s sisters or were otherwise related.

Take Thomas G. Appleton, a member of the 1852 committee for the library, as a case in point. Appleton was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s brother-in-law and the son of Nathan Appleton of the Boston Associates, (the group that began the Lowell textile industry). The elder Appleton was the cousin of Francis Cabot Lowell. Nathan Appleton’s second wife was Harriet Coffin Sumner—her cousin was the abolitionist and reformer Charles Sumner, who was one of Longfellow’s best friends. Another of Longfellow’s friends was Louis Agassiz, the naturalist and Harvard professor. His second wife was Elizabeth Cabot Cary (the Cabots again), who became the first president of Radcliffe. Longfellow went to school with Nathaniel Hawthorne, and in 1835 was chosen to replace Ticknor as Harvard’s professor of modern languages and belles-lettres.

It is impossible to consider any social or public project in nineteenth century Boston without taking these close relationships into account. Needless to say, while all relations and friends do not always share the same opinions, it can be easier to ultimately garner support for a pet project from people who know, like, and respect you than to entice the support of a stranger.

The early town libraries offered free service to their residents and were supported by the public purse, but they required their readers to come to the library to read; in essence, they were reference-only libraries. Because of Ticknor, however, BPL became the first major public library to not only fulfill
the first two conditions of a modern public library (public funding and open to all town residents), but satisfy a third condition as well—it allowed the free circulation of books, a very radical idea indeed for the period.

It was Ticknor who insisted not only on a department in the library to be devoted to “popular” literature, but who championed the idea of free public circulation of books (with some reservations, such as encyclopedias and dictionaries, which he felt were better suited to a reference section). Everett was not at all keen on the idea of freely circulating books but yielded to Ticknor’s insistence. A number of years later Charles Coffin Jewett, a superintendent of the library and later the librarian at Brown University, wrote to Ticknor, “With regards to the great features of the plan—the free circulation of books and the paramount importance attached to the popular department—Mr. Everett had from the beginning, serious misgivings, and . . . he yielded his doubts only to your urgency . . . he repeated to me . . . he did not think he should have yielded his assent, but for your determination not to put your hand to the work unless these features of the plan were adopted in all their prominence.”

Events That Influenced the Founding of BPL

Harvard professors, mayors, a ventriloquist, and a banker all agreed: Boston needed a true public library. Now it was time to create a governing structure, organize the collection, and finally open the doors.

Formation of the Board of Trustees

In February 1852, the city council formed a board of trustees, and both Everett and Ticknor were appointed members. In July the council received the Report of the Trustees of the Public Library of Boston, most of which was written by Ticknor. It was this report that, at long last, made the BPL no longer a topic for endless discussion but a reality.

A copy of Ticknor’s report was read in London by Joshua Bates, the senior partner of Baring Bros. Bank. In 1852 Bates was a pillar of finance, but fifty years earlier he had been a poor boy who spent his evenings in a Boston bookstore, keeping warm and reading whatever the proprietors permitted him to read. If the city would provide the building and pay the upkeep, Bates offered to buy the books for the new library. The sum he mentioned was $50,000, an enormous amount of money for the time. The gift was accepted and the money invested, so the interest would provide a constant stream of revenue for book purchases.

The Establishment of the First Reading Room

More contributions (of money and books) were received, and on March 20, 1854, the first reading room opened in an old schoolhouse on Mason Street. The circulation department opened on May 2.

Ticknor did not stop his efforts with the actual opening of the library. Each evening, the day’s transactions would be brought to his home, and he would study what books had been requested. The city, in the meantime, formed a committee to design a building, and as the plans went forward there was constant correspondence between Bates, Everett, and Ticknor. In 1855, Bates promised to donate enough books to fill the new building. Ticknor worked for months collecting lists of books to be purchased. He consulted specialists in almost every field from engineers to linguists to clergymen, and the lists eventually totaled more than forty thousand titles. Bates approved them all.

In the summer of 1856, Ticknor and his family left Boston for Europe. He spent fifteen months abroad, traveling constantly, meeting with Bates, visiting major libraries, setting up book agencies, and purchasing items for Boston, all at his own expense. On January 1, 1858, the new library on Boylston Street opened, and a report that year showed holdings of 70,851 books and 17,938 pamphlets, an impressive number and a huge increase from those original fifty books gifted by Paris. The library continued to grow, and 1.25 million books circulated in 1899. By that time there were ten branch libraries, sixty-five thousand library cards and 350 employees working in a library system that cost the city of Boston more than $250,000 a year.

The Purpose of a Library

Before the story is finished, however, let us also examine how the founders of this great public institution viewed the purpose of a library. It is fairly clear that the view of a public library as an educational institution was common. In 1899, Josiah Quincy was quoted in the Saturday Evening Post saying, “Our library is indeed an educational institution for adults, rather than a mere collection of books.” The 1852 Trustees Report says:

The system of public education in Boston may probably sustain a comparison with any in the world . . . the schools themselves may admit improvement . . . but the system itself . . . seems perfect . . . to give a first-rate school education, at the public expense to the entire rising generation. But when this object is obtained, our system of public instruction stops . . . we consider that a large public library is of the utmost importance as the means of completing our system of public education.

Spectacles

In 1843, a very practical invention—steel spectacles—contributed in a modest way to a climate favorable to the founding of the library. While steel spectacles were still quite costly for people at low-income levels, these spectacles were much cheaper than earlier eyeglasses that had been made of precious metals. Middle-income people could now afford eyeglasses and because they could see better, it was easier for them to read.

Reference

people are educated.”32 During an 1851 speech in the Massachusetts legislature, Representative John B. Wright, speaking in support of a state bill to permit the establishment of public libraries, said such libraries would “make many in a high degree intelligent, well-informed, useful and respectable citizens.”33

These visions of high-mindedness were accompanied however by a parallel view, often held by the same people, of education and libraries as agents for social guidance and control. In that same speech, Wright saw the role of libraries as reforming vice, while in his 1839 letter Ticknor also spoke of education as being a benefit to both the “majority who have but little of the property that is taxed to provide for the education, and for the interest of the rich, who protect their property by this moral police.”34 “Moral police” is an extremely telling phrase that reeks of social control and describes a classic us-versus-them viewpoint.

In discussing access to the library in the 1852 Trustees Report, Ticknor wrote somewhat more mildly that it would be a “great matter” if as many books as possible would be carried into “poor families and ‘cheap boardinghouses;’ in short, wherever they will be most likely to affect life and raise personal character.”35 In the same report Ticknor wrote “it is of paramount importance that the means of general information should be so diffused that the largest possible number of persons should be induced to read and understand questions of social order.”36 One hundred and fifty years after Ticknor, Everett, and Cogswell struggled with the question of libraries and their role in social control, that question is still with us—filtering and the USA PATRIOT Act come immediately to mind.

While some library and social historians have gone so far as to say that the public library was established by authoritarian-elitists from the upper strata of American society; that these men had little faith in the common people, indeed, feared and distrusted them; and that their activities were motivated by an unbounded instability of national life; I submit that it is possible for the same person to have several motivations for the same beliefs and actions. It does not negate the humanitarian and educational motives of many of the founders of BPL that they also saw libraries and education as a useful tool for the promotion of social peace.37 In the end, BPL is an institution that was truly created by a myriad of circumstances and attitudes that have together birthed a phenomenon that was—and is—very much more than the sum of its parts.

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Unintentional Recruiting for Diversity

Denice Adkins and Lisa K. Hussey

Based on interviews with Latino undergraduate students, Latino and Native American graduate students in library and information science, and Latino librarians, this paper documents some techniques librarians unintentionally use to persuade or dissuade students from becoming librarians. The positive techniques include developing relationships with library patrons, helping patrons become familiar with the library, demonstrating librarianship as a service profession, and demonstrating librarianship as a respectful profession. When used intentionally, these techniques may become strategies that can help librarians recruit for future generations.

Library and information science (LIS) literature presents several types of intentional recruitment strategies, such as targeted marketing campaigns, scholarships, and mentoring programs. These intentional recruitment strategies are overtly used to draw students into the library profession by triggering the idea of library education in them, helping them pay for their education, and providing collegial support for them through that education. This paper deals with the topic of unintentional recruitment: unconscious strategies used by librarians and library science faculty that affect patrons’ likelihood to choose librarianship as a career. Unintentional recruitment strategies can be positive, inducing the patron to think of librarianship as a good career choice, or negative, inducing the patron to disregard librarianship as a career choice.

Every working day, librarians have the ability to draw new recruits into the profession by the use of these positive strategies, and likewise are able to deter them through the use of negative strategies. Strategies of negative recruitment, as found in our investigation, are not the traditional, “in-your-face” negative strategies that one might expect. We found more subtle negative strategies, including lack of communication with potential recruits, lack of visibility in the community, and lack of respect for the patron. Positive strategies included personal attention from library staff, providing a supportive environment, demonstrating respect for the patron, and recognizing diverse research and entertainment needs. Examples drawn from the literature and our research will illustrate how each of these strategies affects potential recruits to the profession.

The Research Projects

Our findings rose out of three separate research projects. Each of these projects used in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This qualitative method was chosen to capture respondents’ own words and stories to explain their situations. We felt that this method would be more appropriate for working with underrepresented populations because they have a story to tell about their choices that may not be the same as that of the dominant population, and that may not have been revealed in survey responses. While quantitative measures illuminate large-scale trends, they do not show the underlying drive or motivations for certain groups to pursue specific opportunities. Qualitative measures seek sufficient data to generalize to the entire population, indicating what result might occur; qualitative measures focus on smaller groups, and suggest why a result occurred.

Interviewing is a way of answering questions that focus on why or how certain events happen, often within a general or personal history. “Why” questions specifically focus on explaining a particular incident or event and look at “operational links over time.” In other words, why questions look at histories and how individuals or groups have experienced them. Through interviews, participants are able to provide historical information from their personal and social points of view. Interviews provide an opportunity for open discussion where both the researcher and the interviewee can “construct meanings” together. This is an important

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How Are Librarians Made?  
What the Literature Says and What We Found

Entering this profession is a choice. Very few people can say they “accidentally” enrolled in library school or that they did not realize their master’s degree in library science would lead to future library employment. Scholarship money, flexible course schedules, and distance education opportunities are tools to make LIS education possible. By the time these considerations come into play, though, the student has already decided upon librarianship as a career path. The literature and our investigations posit four factors involved in recruiting librarians: knowing a librarian, being familiar with library work, acknowledging librarianship as a service profession, and acknowledging librarianship as a respectful profession.

Knowing a Librarian

For thirty years, LIS students have indicated that they were motivated to pursue LIS education by other librarians. The 1988 Library and Information Science Student Attitudes, Demographics, and Aspirations (LISSADA) survey suggested that 33 percent of LIS students were inspired to become librarians by other librarians. A qualitative study of school librarians in the 1990s reinforced this: sixteen out of eighteen women interviewed had some form of encouragement and reinforcement from relatives or friends who were librarians. And in a personal “case study,” Latino librarian Ronald Rodriguez traced his career path back to an inspirational junior high school librarian.

Our research echoed this. Knowing a librarian made a positive difference in librarians’ and LIS students’ career decisions. When we asked Latino librarians what influenced their entry into the field, several indicated that they had role models, mentors, and friends who advised them to pursue the degree. The graduate students had similar stories. All of the graduate students told us how working with librarians during their academic career helped shaped their decision to pursue a LIS degree. As children, some of the LIS students recalled that their school and public librarians knew them by name and encouraged them to spend as much time in the library as possible.

Knowing a librarian makes a positive difference, but our results also suggested that students of color may not always know their librarians. Of the Latino undergraduates interviewed, only one had a relationship with a librarian. Elena was part of a Latino book group led by this librarian and also had informal contact with a library school student who shared her interest in juvenile legal defense. Other than Elena, the undergraduates had no positive relationships with librarians that could have been used for recruitment purposes.

Being Comfortable in Libraries and Familiar with the Conditions of Librarianship

In general, people tend to go into professions they know something about and are in a familiar setting. Media research suggests that although some children have direct experience with a limited number of professionals such as doctors and police officers, much of their knowledge of the working world is based on careers they see portrayed on television. Unfortunately, libraries do not garner the popular media and television depictions of courtrooms and hospitals. The Public Library Association (PLA) has said that one barrier to recruitment was “inadequate understanding of the library profession.”

Library school students seem to lack this “inadequate understanding.” The LISSADA study found that more than half of all library school students had previous library experience. Esser’s school librarian informants underwent a “cognitive apprenticeship” during their elementary years, by working as student assistants in the school library. Caywood cites two librarians whose career decisions were based on library volunteer experience obtained during their teenage years. Children who volunteer in their school libraries are more likely to become librarians. Teenagers who obtain part-time jobs shelving materials are more likely to become librarians.

Our research supported this. A Latino librarian, when interviewed, described how his career stemmed from initial pre-professional library employment. “I was a library aide, a page... you just sort of realize that it’s a very interesting type of work and move in that direction and before you know it,
you’re immersed in getting a formal education.” One of the Latina LIS graduate students had volunteered at the school library during her high school years, and two others had worked in libraries as undergraduates. Two LIS graduate students ended up working in libraries as full-time paraprofessionals after graduating from college and quickly realized librarianship was the career they wanted. Working in a library environment allows potential librarians to see the nature of library work, while at the same time promoting relationships with librarian coworkers. Regardless, the situation with Latino undergraduates was not particularly encouraging. Of the undergraduate population, only Elena had library experience; in eighth grade, she volunteered at her school library. The other seven undergraduates had no work-related contact with libraries and, one must conclude, no ideas about the nature of library work.

Work is not the only type of experience that might draw people into a career in librarianship. When library service is visible in the community, these services might lead one progressively to a career in librarianship. However, none of the Latino librarians we interviewed told us that outreach had attracted them to librarianship. Nor did the LIS graduate students mention library programming or outreach as influential to their decision. They had enjoyed spending time in the library, but not as a result of an effective outreach program. This suggests that programming and outreach on their own have not been sufficient to draw people of color into librarianship; however, these experiences may reinforce motivations already brought on by knowing librarians or working in libraries.

The Latino undergraduates were likely to have participated in some sort of library outreach, cultural, or bibliographic-instruction program. Of the undergraduates, Elena and Felicita had attended library story times as children. Four had taken a library orientation program or attended a library orientation lecture. Two had actually taken formal library skills coursework, and another two said librarians came to their classes at the request of teachers to discuss appropriate sources and search techniques for their subject areas. Despite their activity in these programs, students said they were not comfortable in the library or in approaching staff for assistance. This does not say much for the likelihood of recruiting these students into the profession.

Two New Ideas about Making Librarians

Our studies reinforced the ideas of personal relationships and familiarity, but also found two additional factors that attract students of color—they saw librarianship as a profession in which they could be of service to others, and they saw librarianship as a profession in which people were treated with respect.

Being of Service to Others

Martin says that librarianship is ripe for recruitment despite being characterized as a service profession. However, we found that Latinos and Native Americans were looking for career paths where they could transform people’s lives and affect them for the better. For these individuals, recruitment needs to emphasize that librarianship is the right choice for them because librarianship is a service profession. During her interview, one Latina librarian said, “I didn’t want to go into corporate America when I graduated. I wanted to do something to help others.” She saw librarianship as a helping career because she had been helped by librarians prior to becoming one herself. Likewise, all of the graduate students discussed their desire to use their professional training to benefit their home communities. Teresa wanted to return to her childhood library to help bring about positive change in the community. Ana had already started working in her neighborhood, acting as a literacy advocate while also serving as a role model for the community. They wanted to be positive role models within their communities, and saw librarianship as a way to reach and serve the people.

To a person, the Latino undergraduates we interviewed were all interested in taking up a service-oriented profession when they left college. Several wanted to be doctors, one wanted to be a healthcare administrator, two wanted to be lawyers, and one wanted to be a teacher. When asked why they settled on their specific career paths, all of the respondents echoed Berta: “More than anything, I just want to help people. I feel that [my community], they’re the reason I am where, why I’m still here today, so I want to give back.” Admittedly, these students may have been more service-minded than their peers. Unfortunately, it seems that some students of color do not think of librarianship as a service profession. Solomon’s 2002 survey of African-American undergraduates found that less than 30 percent of the students associated community service with librarianship. These results suggest that people who want to serve the public might overlook librarianship as a possibility.

Demonstrating Respect for Others

Respect is an underlying characteristic in many career and educational decisions. Individuals want to receive respect for their work and feel a sense of pride and accomplishment for what they do. In Latino and Native American communities, teachers are accorded a great deal of respect. Librarians may not get this respect, but nonetheless, learning and knowledge are respected.

Several Latino librarians suggested the role that respectful treatment played in their career decisions. Their coworkers and friends provided them with a sense of encouragement and support that engaged them and brought them into librarianship. One librarian contrasted the respect from her coworkers with the lack of respect she received from faculty in her graduate LIS education. Likewise, the graduate students spoke of LIS and librarianship as a respectful profession. They were given the idea that what they wanted to do and what they were trying to learn was important. The recognition of their information needs gave them a sense of importance and worth. When they described interactions with librarians, they did so with
respect for the individuals and what they did in their work.

Latino undergraduates’ career choices (doctors and lawyers who garner respect, teachers who are respected in the community) suggest that they expect to be respected as professionals, and they anticipate treating other people with respect. Said one woman, “I respect authority a lot, so I want to be able to work with someone that I respect.” If they see respect between patrons and staff, undergraduates might be more inclined to see librarianship as a respectful profession. However, many of these students seemed disinclined to approach librarians, an indicator that they may not be expecting a respectful relationship between librarians and patrons.

Recruitment Strategies

Having extracted these factors from interviews with undergraduates, LIS students, and librarians of color, it is not difficult to see how librarians might use this information for recruitment purposes. We suggest four strategies that could change unintentional recruitment to specific, targeted efforts. These are not necessarily short-term solutions to a diversity crisis. However, these strategies might make it easier to grow your own librarians of color by welcoming them into the library and demonstrating the service and respect they seek in a profession.

Strategy One: Developing Personal Relationships

One of the easiest ways to get young people of any racial or ethnic background to think positively about librarians as a profession is to develop positive personal relationships with them. Esser cites one woman who was motivated to become a librarian because when this woman was a child, her librarian made a habit of selecting books for her to read.15

One of the graduate students shared a similar experience. “In the sixth grade, I volunteered at the school library after class. At the end of the year, I received an award from the school librarian.” The recognition and respect she received from the librarian encouraged her to think of librarianship when she sought her own career path. Some librarians might already be engaged in personal relationships with their patrons, recommending books, helping them find information, and providing encouragement in their educational aspirations. We talk to patrons every day; we can direct some of that talk toward the goal of recruitment.

Deterrent One: Keeping to Yourself

Where most librarians fail in this regard is in not creating relationships with people who could become librarians. This was particularly obvious when speaking with the Latino undergraduate students—only one had a relationship with a librarian. In some sense, not creating relationships is natural. It would be difficult to develop personal relationships with every single person who comes into the library, and it feels unfair to treat one person better than another. However, if we do not start talking with high school and college students and help them see librarianship as a valid career choice, we risk losing these students to more visible careers such as medicine and law. Admittedly, not all students who enter college with the goals of becoming MDs or JDs actually will, but they also will not get an MLS unless they know it is an option.

Strategy Two: Making Libraries and Librarianship Familiar

People look for jobs in fields they know something about. Unfortunately, librarians are rarely as familiar to people as we would like to believe. One Latina undergraduate admitted she avoided going to the university library, and tried to use computer resources whenever possible. Another said that she hated the university library because it was so big, and she did not know where anything was. By contrast, she found the smaller public library clean, attractive, and well-organized.

This suggests that librarians—particularly public librarians—need to take a much more active role in teaching young people how to find and evaluate information in the building itself. Public librarians could build relationships with middle and high school teachers in ethnic neighborhoods, presenting information literacy programs in the classroom and encouraging class visits to the public library. This has the dual benefit of helping students understand how to use the library while also developing a sense of relationship between the students and the public librarian.

Another, perhaps more productive, avenue for garnering new recruits is library employment. Once she has established a relationship with high school teachers, the public librarian can alert teachers to position openings at the library and encourage them to recommend promising students of color. Teachers have closer contact with students than most librarians do and can be used as allies in the recruitment field.

Deterrent Two: Waiting for Them to Take the Lead

Public library work can be tiring enough without taking on the additional burdens of a library awareness campaign, particularly one that suggests no immediate measurable return for the effort. If you do not tell people about the library, you will not be making more work for yourself. Unfortunately, they also will not know what library resources are available to them or have a reason to visit. In waiting for them to take the lead, you run the risk that they will not find the opportunity to do so.

Strategy Three: Demonstrating Service

The undergraduates we interviewed almost universally wanted jobs in which they could help other people. Earning a living was important but it was a secondary concern. One of the obvious ways to demonstrate that librarianship is a service profession is to do outreach. Librarians need to be active in the community, working with and for the people, if they want to recruit Latinos and Native Americans into the profession. Plan programs that bring diverse groups together. Go into schools, visit classes, and show them how libraries can help them with their research questions. Partner with community service agencies and make your library a career training site. And tell people in no uncertain terms that librarians are there to help them.

Deterrent Three: Not Caring, or Being Seen As Uncaring

Librarianship has always been based on connecting people with information, but sometimes working with information seems to take precedence over working with people. Solomon’s African-American undergraduates did not perceive librarians as service-oriented. Neither, apparently, did our Latino undergraduates. In talking about her high school librarian, one woman said, “She just didn’t care about helping us. I went to the city library, where at least they acted like they cared.” In the rush to become an information profession, it is easy to forget that librarianship is also a people profession and a helping
profession. To attract diverse applicants to library jobs, this service orientation needs to be emphasized.

Strategy Four: Demonstrating Respect
Everyone who comes into the library deserves to be treated with a high level of respect, but patrons who are uncomfortable in a white, monolingual (English) environment need that feeling of being respected even more. They need to feel the library is a place for cross-cultural understanding and that their information needs are as important as anyone else’s. By treating each question as a “legitimate” inquiry, the librarian helps provide a level of validity to an individual’s information needs. Kathy, an LIS graduate student, commented on her experience with the high school librarian’s information needs. “I usually went straight to her . . . and she’d be like ‘Oohh, what do we get to find today?’” Even when a question is left unanswered, individuals remember and respond to the interaction. It does not take a lot to encourage questions but the results can have a strong impact.

Deterrent Four: Demonstrating Disrespect
Librarians who have been exposed to one culture and rewarded for their conformity to that culture’s values may not be able to make an easy transition to cross-cultural understanding. By marginalizing a patron’s information needs, acting as if they are silly or irrelevant, librarians demonstrate a lack of respect for their patrons. In doing this, they also alienate that person from the library instead of welcoming him or her into it. Part of respect is the recognition of different ideas and diverse needs. Librarians need to provide an open and welcoming environment, which includes respectfully helping colleagues recognize and understand their own personal viewpoints and how those may conflict with the provision of good service to all.

Summary
Recruitment to the profession begins early and is supported by the actions of librarians. Recruitment goes beyond just offering money for someone to go to library school. Money is nice but scholarships are not enough to encourage people to go into a profession about which they do not care. Scholarship opportunities for underrepresented students are meaningful and important but they are not the complete solution. In the recruitment process, small steps are as important as big ones. The American Library Association’s Spectrum Initiative (www.al.org/spectrum) is a wonderful, big step: selected students of color, Spectrum Scholars, are provided with substantial financial aid, as well as training for leadership, networking with peers and mentors, and the support of the library community. However, Spectrum scholars already cared about libraries and librarianship prior to earning their scholarships.

To get future students of color to care about librarianship, our research suggests that librarians should provide a base of support that emphasizes respect and service. Librarians should be visible as service agents within the community. Children must be able to identify “their” librarian, even if they do not visit the library regularly. Teens must understand that the library provides service without value judgments. College students must view the library as essential to mastering their information needs. This will not happen without librarians becoming active outside the library. Librarians’ quotidian interactions with patrons carry messages beyond “The answer to your reference question is . . .” Each librarian must speculate on what messages she or he is sending to young people of color and make certain those messages are the kind that will promote librarianship as a career option. The day is very far away when librarians will be able to say, “We’ve done our share; the need is filled.” By using the techniques of outreach, social responsibility, and human consideration, we might bring that day a little closer.

References and Notes
14. For examples of respect and trust accorded to teachers of Latino and Native American students, see Norma Gonzalez et al., Teacher Research on Funds of Knowledge: Learning from Households (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, 1993), ERIC, ED 360 825; Siobhan Nicolau and Carmen L. Ramos, Together Is Better: Building Strong Relationships between Schools and Hispanic Parents (New York: Hispanic Policy Development Project, 1990), ERIC, ED 325 543; or Joseph Coburn and Stephen Nelson, Characteristics of Successful Indian Students: Research and Development Program for Indian Educators (Portland, Ore.: Northwest Regional Educational Lab, 1987), ERIC, ED 297 909. It goes without saying that this respect and trust is conditional upon the behavior of the teacher.
15. Esser, “In Each Other’s Memory,” 38.
Assessing the True Nature of Information Transactions at a Suburban Library

Rhonda S. Boyd

As intuitive search engines and ubiquitous Internet access have simplified customers’ ability to obtain information on their own, information librarians at the Gwinnett County Public Library system in Georgia have reported changes in the types of questions they answer. Although this study disproved our hypothesis that customers are answering more straightforward questions on their own and requesting staff assistance with more complex ones, it provided useful information on the nature of the questions being asked. The results prompted us to rethink our ideas about what needs to be done to serve our customers and what level of staff is needed to provide that service, prompting a dramatic shift in our service model.

The Gwinnett County Public Library (GCPL) in Lawrenceville, Georgia, began offering Internet access on all public workstations in 1996. In the years since, we have built a homepage that provides links to a significant number of useful Web sites on a variety of topics, and we have gradually been replacing print sources with their online counterparts. Four years ago we began a strategic initiative aimed at increasing accessibility for the library’s customers in a county where long commutes and active leisure time participation are the norm. We built a virtual branch, Virtualville, focused on providing 24/7 service as similar to that offered in a bricks-and-mortar branch as possible. This concept has proved very successful, based on fiscal year 2004 stats showing that more than 65 percent of our 630,000 holds were placed online, and about 41 percent of our 990,813 renewals were done remotely. Last year the “door count” for Virtualville exceeded 1.2 million. The virtual branch, designed to allow customers to use the library in their own time and place, and the general affluence and technical facility of county residents made it inevitable that we should begin to see a change in the nature of information questions handled at our physical branches.

An analysis of reference transactions in fiscal year 2002 revealed that information staff members were handling an average of less than five questions per hour, a number that has remained fairly constant. (In FY02, staff fielded approximately 394,107 information questions, extrapolated from two one-week samples. Since the library had ten branches, each open seventy-one hours each week, this translated to about 10.7 questions per hour per branch, further divided by two-to-three staff members assigned to the information desk at each branch at any given time.) Staff members also began reporting that they were handling more equipment- or technology-related questions than in the past. We needed to know if this was true in order to reassess the skill set and training staff needed to meet our customers’ expectations.

Finally, given the rapidly increasing percentage of the budget allocated to staff salaries and benefits, we are constantly looking for ways to reallocate staff, not only through customer self-service initiatives but also by shifting responsibilities among positions filled by current staff members to make our operations more efficient. We needed to know whether the job of the information librarian had shifted to such an extent that we needed different positions or at least a different mix of positions. We designed a study that we hoped would provide the answers to these questions. Based on the high interest in a June 2004 American Library Association Annual Conference program called “Balancing the Load: Strategies for Working Smarter,” in which one of the study collaborators, Elleene Morgan, presented some of the results of our study, these issues appear to be of broad interest to other public libraries. No one has money to burn, and we are all committed to providing good stewardship of our community resources and the best possible service to our customers.

The Issue

Customers are gradually becoming more independent in their information-seeking behavior as Internet access becomes more widespread, resources are increasingly available in electronic format, and...
search engines make information easier to locate. We hypothesized that the nature of the work done by the information staff was changing as a result of customers doing more of their own searching, at least for the more straightforward questions. Anecdotally, it appeared that the information staff was being called on for assistance with more complex questions, and that much of their time was spent educating customers on the use of electronic resources (including the library catalog) and assisting them in sending and retrieving e-mail. However, we had no data to support these observations.

The Reference Transaction Statistics

The reference transaction statistics we collect each year provide a good indication of the number of questions asked, and we can compare these figures to previous years and to other libraries. However, we needed a more qualitative picture of information services. We needed to know what kinds of questions our customers were bringing to the library and how our information staff was spending its direct customer service time. This additional information could help us better assess the skills needed by information staff, the information staffing levels necessary to provide optimal service, what adjustments, if any, were needed to provide the resources our customers require, and what additional types of information service may be offered in the future.

The Process

We began by surveying information staff to get their perceptions of how they spent their time and what kinds of questions they were handling. We also asked anyone who had been working in the information department at GCPL for more than five years to comment on how their job had changed during that time (see appendix 1).

Nearly everyone cited the dramatic shift away from traditional reference—locating print information on a fairly well-defined topic—and toward answering more complex, in-depth questions, often requiring (and made easier and faster by) the use of online resources. One representative observation was that the focus of questions has changed from information to access, with much time being spent teaching customers how to select the appropriate database, how to access and use databases and Internet resources, and how to evaluate information on the Web, with the result that individual customer interactions are more time-intensive. Another person commented that information specialists are now required to be technology troubleshooters and electronic search experts in addition to possessing traditional reference librarian skills.

In general, responses indicated that a great deal of time was being spent “interacting with machines” and assisting customers with the use of technology, such as self-check machines, copiers, and the print management system, not to mention computers. Staff indicated that they were often unable to answer many of the computer-related questions they received, even with the use of the online troubleshooting guide provided by our information technology (IT) department.

Staff from several branches mentioned the increased diversity and number of customers who speak limited English among their clientele, resulting in much time being spent bridging cultural, ethnic, and language gaps in order to provide service. Many people also pointed out the increased role of information staff in linking customers (immigrants, newcomers, and the disadvantaged) to community services, providing referrals and directions to a variety of other agencies.

Staff perceptions of how they spent their time varied tremendously, not only from branch to branch, but also within branches. For example, estimates of time spent delivering direct customer service ranged from 25 percent to 94 percent system-wide, with a range from 28 percent to 85 percent just within a single branch. When asked how their direct customer service time was broken down, readers’ advisory was consistently cited as taking the least time, with questions about library services and processes perceived as the next least time-consuming, followed by access (both technical and navigational). The range for the percent of time spent on traditional “reference” questions was 10 percent to 75 percent. Remember, these ranges represent staff members’ estimates of how their direct customer service hours—not the number of hours they were at work—were spent.

Using staff members’ suggestions for better defining the various categories, we developed a customer assistance log to be used by all information staff during a two-week period from January 19 through February 1, 2003 (see appendix 2). For two weeks, staff recorded the following information about each transaction: age group of the questioner; length of time needed to complete the transaction; and the transaction component or components involved, such as Readers’ Advisory, Reference, Access to Resources, Access to Equipment, Services, and Processes, based on definitions provided. We also asked staff to track the date and time period for all transactions.

Results

During the two-week study period, staff completed 18,861 information transactions. Of those, 2,159, or 11.6 percent, were unusable due to bad or missing data in one or more fields, leaving 16,702 transactions with valid data.

As shown in table 1, the overwhelming majority of the transactions—about 80 percent—involved adults, followed by children (11.1 percent), and teens (8.7 percent). We asked staff to estimate the age level of the questioner even if the question was being asked on behalf of someone else.

Complexity is a difficult concept to measure without analysis of individual transactions. We planned to test the hypothesis that information staff were dealing with more complex questions by looking at two factors: the number of transactions with components in multiple categories and the amount of time required to complete transactions. Our expectation was that a high percentage of transactions would involve multiple components and would take fifteen minutes or more to complete. However, the data did not support this. Table 2 shows that the majority of transactions (13,408 or 81.3 percent) involved a single component.

As table 3 shows, the transactions that involved more than one component did take longer to complete: 1.7 percent of single-component transactions, 5.8 percent of two-component questions and 18.2 percent of three-component transactions required more than fifteen minutes. However, multiple-component transactions represent a much smaller percentage of total transactions than anecdotal observation would have suggested and, as shown in table 4, nearly 75 percent of all transactions required less than five minutes to complete.

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Questions that involve identifying and selecting materials that meet customers’ stated needs, including author, age group, “other books like . . . ,” chapter books, accelerated reader group, “other books like . . . ,” dictionary, and so forth. Fewer than 500, or 2.9 percent, of the transactions required more than fifteen minutes to complete.

Staff used the following definitions to determine the appropriate component or components for each transaction:

1. Readers’ Advisory. Questions that involve identifying and selecting materials that meet customers’ stated needs, including author, age group, “other books like . . . ,” dictionary, and so on.

2. Reference. Information questions that can be answered from print or online resources, questions about other agencies or locations in the community (for example, English as a Second Language classes, where to get a driver’s license, school clusters, polling locations, local tutors, word processing, and so forth), or local directions.

3. Access to Equipment. Technical assistance provided at customer’s request, including print management, fixing or troubleshooting technical problems with computers (public or remote), express-check machines, and copiers.

4. Access to Resources. Assistance dealing with access to resources, including navigating the catalog, databases, and Internet; instruction in use of resources; assistance setting up netLibrary accounts; and e-mail (enrolling, customizing interface, setting language to other than English, attachments, and so forth).

5. Services and Processes. Questions about holds, renewals, interlibrary loan, requests for title purchase, due dates, meeting rooms, book sales, directions to other branches within the system, programs, hours, library card registration, policy and procedure explanations, and so forth.

Table 5 shows the component category distribution for each branch, ranging from access to resources and services and processes (in a statistical tie for highest) to readers’ advisory (lowest). Interestingly, though not unexpectedly, the telephone reference center (TRC) had the highest percentage of reference questions (46.2 percent), and the lowest percentage of access to equipment (2 percent) and access to resources (11.5 percent) questions. They were near the bottom in readers’ advisory questions (2.7 percent), though this can be expected to change with the advent of the readers’ Web, a readers’ services link from Virtualville, directing readers’ advisory questions to either TRC via phone or e-mail. There was considerable variation among branches in all categories, with access to resources showing the widest range, from 11.5 percent (TRC) to 40 percent (Mountain Park). The narrowest range occurred in readers’ advisory, from 2.3 percent at Lilburn to 15.3 percent at Snellville.

About 67 percent of question components dealt with subjects or methods not historically associated with the information milieu in public libraries—access to resources, access to equipment, and services and policies, while the remaining 33 percent dealt with reference and readers’ advisory—question categories more traditionally viewed as falling within the purview of the information staff.

Challenges with the Study Design and Implementation

As is the case with any study design, no matter how rigorously it is pre-tested, there are always questions about the validity of a study where the transactions are self-reported. We relied on staff to record their own estimates of age of the questioner, time spent, and transaction components. Inevitably this creates some inconsistency, no matter how tightly drawn the instructions. However, staffing limitations and concerns about perceived intrusiveness persuaded us that self-reporting was the most feasible option. Also, we recognized that the component definitions we used were somewhat artificial within the context of an actual information setting. Although it is not easy to distinguish between, say, reference and access to resources in a single transaction, we did ask staff to do this in order to get a sense of what types of components were more prevalent. We did encounter a problem that prevented us from drawing conclusions about staffing needs by day or hour at the branch level. The pre-test was done using a draft customer assistance log, and minor changes were made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>No. of Transactions</th>
<th>No. of Adults</th>
<th>% of Adults</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>% of Children</th>
<th>No. of Teens</th>
<th>% of Teens</th>
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<td>BUF</td>
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<td>1,838</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>8.7</td>
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</table>

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before the study period began. Some staff at some branches inadvertently used the draft customer assistance log for at least part of the study, resulting in a significant amount of missing or invalid data specifically related to the time period for which data was recorded. While not enough to call the system-wide conclusions about length of time and question components into question, we were hesitant to use the data to make statements about the busiest time of day or day of the week in specific branches—certainly one of the goals of the study.

Implications

While the information questions staff handle may not be getting more complex by our stated definition, it is fair to say that the nature of the questions has changed. It has shifted away from traditional reference—locating print information on a reasonably well-defined topic, and toward answering questions that require both knowledge of technology and a clear and articulate understanding of library philosophy, policies, procedures, and services in addition to more traditional reference skills. Increasingly, the effective information librarian is becoming a jack-of-all-trades and must be the master of all of them in order to do an effective job.

This analysis of the type of questions currently being handled by information staff allowed us to recommend a number of options and strategies for optimal service and staffing:

- In order for staff to meet the demands of the job, training may need to be adjusted to accommodate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution of Number of Categories Checked</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Components Checked</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<th>TABLE 3</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transaction Completion Time by Number of Components</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td># Components</td>
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<th>TABLE 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Time Needed to Complete Transactions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Branch</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUF</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHL</td>
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<td>DUL</td>
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<td>FFR</td>
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<td>LAW</td>
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<td>MPK</td>
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<td>NOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>System</td>
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</table>
the changing nature of the questions received. For example, as the number of community newcomers increases, staff may need special training about the best way to locate information about community agencies. All customer service staff may benefit from additional training in the areas of library philosophy, policies and procedures so that they can answer customers’ questions and concerns without having to refer them elsewhere.

- Staff needs to be more conversant with technology, so that requests for assistance of this type can be handled more comfortably and confidently.
- Technology training for customers will allow them to be even more self-sufficient in the information area. Plans are now being made to address this goal in the current strategic plan system objectives related to information connections and literacy.
- Strategies need to be devised to make customers more aware of the range of questions staff can handle if we want to increase activity in particular categories, such as readers’ advisory.

As a higher percentage of questions fielded by the information staff become less source-reliant and more dependent on knowledge about technology and the library system’s philosophy and services, and as traditional circulation tasks become more achievable with less staff intervention, it makes sense to rethink the allocation of duties. We have, in fact, moved significantly in this direction since the conclusion of the study. We are gradually implementing a single “help desk” service module that will allow a more seamless response to customers requiring assistance. Information librarians (now library associates) are becoming just as proficient at checking out materials and fielding questions about extended loan fees as they are with answering more traditional information questions. This shift was made easier by our recent migration to a new ILS and the need to train all staff. All branch staff received the same training in the circulation and searching functions.

While this study did not attempt to assess the use of staff time spent on various necessary backroom activities, such as weeding, professional development, or committee work, this information would have provided another useful means of looking at the way responsibilities are allocated, not only at branches, but throughout the system. However, the information we did gather provided a catalyst for dramatically redesigning our service model. In many ways the new model resembles the one with which many of us in the profession grew up. Although we may not have had the courage to fall back on such a simple solution had it not been supported by the analysis of the data, the nature of our service model now reflects the true nature of the information transactions we receive.

### TABLE 5

Distribution of Component Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Readers’ Advisory</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Access to Equipment</th>
<th>Access to Resources</th>
<th>Services and Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUF</td>
<td>1,824</td>
<td>2,402</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEN</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>1,555</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHL</td>
<td>1,882</td>
<td>2,383</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUL</td>
<td>1,795</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFR</td>
<td>1,455</td>
<td>1,786</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAW</td>
<td>1,684</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIL</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>1,469</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPK</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1,297</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>1,761</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNE</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>1,042</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>16,502</td>
<td>20,155</td>
<td>1,755</td>
<td>4,901</td>
<td>2,756</td>
<td>5,386</td>
<td>5,357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PUBLIC LIBRARIES JULY/AUGUST 2005
Appendix 1
First Impression Questionnaire
(To be completed by all Librarian II’s and Information Specialists)

We often wear many hats in order to fulfill all of the responsibilities listed in our job description. As the first step in a process that will collect actual data on the way the information staff’s time is spent, we are asking each of you to give us your estimate of the amount of time you spend in each of the task categories listed below. Again, we expect this to be an estimate—your first impression—of the way you spend your time during a typical week.

Collection Development
(Weeding, merchandising) ____%

Supervision
(Includes CSAs/volunteers, evaluations, coaching, scheduling, and so on) ____%

Staff Development
(Includes committee and other system meetings, workshops) ____%

Professional Activities
(Includes professional reading, reviewing print and electronic resources) ____%

Direct Customer Service
Of the direct customer service total, indicate below the percent of time spent on:

   Information questions (“Reference”) ____% 
   Readers’ Advisory questions ____% 

Questions/assistance dealing with library services and processes (holds, renewals, due dates, meeting rooms, computer classes, book sale, directions, programs, hours, and so on) ____%

Questions/assistance dealing with access (print management, technical problems with computers, navigating the catalog/databases, instruction in use of resources, setting up netLibrary account, and so on) ____%

If you have worked in the Information Department at GCPL longer than five years, briefly comment on the ways your job has changed. Include changes in the nature of your interactions with customers, changes in the type of questions you answer, changes in the skills needed to do your job effectively, and so on.

Besides the Direct Customer Service categories used here, can you identify additional categories that would help us clarify the ways in which we are serving our customers? Think about the types of questions or requests for assistance you receive when you are working with customers face-to-face or on the telephone.
Appendix 2

Name:________________________ Day/Date:__________________

Branch:_______________________ Time Period(s): (circle)

(FFR staff: mark questions answered in TRC)

9 A.M.–noon  noon–3 P.M.  3–6 P.M.  6–9 P.M.

Customer Assistance Log

Instructions: Make an entry for each customer you assist. Indicate the total time spent with each customer, and mark all categories that apply to that particular session. If a question does not clearly fall into one of the defined categories, mark it and add a brief comment about the nature of the question. If you conclude the session and later assist the same customer, make another entry on the log. In the Child/Teen/Adult column, indicate the age of the questioner, not the age of the person on whose behalf the question is asked. If you use this form for more than one time period in a day, note the beginning and end of each time period in the left margin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child/Teen/Adult</th>
<th>Session Time</th>
<th>Question Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Time not delivering direct customer service was spent on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Do not be concerned with making time spent on all tasks total 100 percent of your time, but do list specific tasks or processes on which you spent significant time today.
A MATTER OF TRUST...

We’ve just returned from the ALA Annual Conference, where librarians from across the country asked us why they should consider Polaris for their integrated library system. Our reply was simple:

“Trust, honesty, and integrity.”

Purchasing a new ILS is arguably the most important decision your library will make for the next 7-10 years – a decision that goes beyond the RFP, functionality and even the price – to the relationship your library will have with your vendor now, and in the years ahead.

At Polaris Library Systems, we’re committed to ensuring that nothing gets between what we do and the trust our customers have in us. We are proud that every Polaris ILS customer is a reference. We have the best customer support in the industry – and have an extensive and unique set of metrics to measure that support.

For superior technology, a company that is focused on its customers’ success, and a staff committed to ensuring that every customer stays a reference, we say “You can count on us.”

VOTED #1 in customer support

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New!

2005 PLDS Statistical Report
(ISBN 0-8389-8315-4) $80
This annual publication provides invaluable quantitative information on library finances, salaries, output measures, technology, and related topics. The 2005 edition features the results of a special survey on public library finance.

A Library Board’s Practical Guide to Finding the Right Library Director
(ISBN 0-8389-8349-9) $20
This guide will help library boards better understand the process of hiring a library director, consider the variables, envision their goals, develop a plan, work as a team, and obtain optimum results for their library.

Defending Access with Confidence: A Practical Workshop on Intellectual Freedom
(ISBN 8389-8331-5) $60
This interactive, ready-to-use Intellectual Freedom training program for public library employees is based on American Library Association guidelines relating to intellectual freedom. Defending Access with Confidence provides libraries with step-by-step directions for planning and rolling out a comprehensive training program on access issues, and on how to resolve challenges to access. As a result of this training, library employees will gain an understanding of the history and philosophy of intellectual freedom in American libraries, and will be better able to identify and interpret library policies, and to recognize and respond effectively to challenges to access.

PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
A division of the American Library Association
50 EAST HURON STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60611-2795
www.pla.org
See How Your Library Compares to Other Libraries

The 2005 Public Library Data Service Statistical Report is now available. This year's report includes a special survey on public library finance. To order, call the ALA Order Department at 1-866-746-7252. The 2005 PLDS Statistical Report (ISBN 0-8389-8315-4) is $80 with discounts for PLA and ALA members. Get your library's copy today! For more information visit www.pla.org

Registration for PLA 2006 Opens September 1

PLA 2006 will be held March 21–25, 2006, in Boston, Massachusetts. Online registration for the conference will open September 1, 2005. PLA members also will receive registration brochures via postal mail. The conference will feature:

- A choice of more than 150 educational offerings that will provide you with an opportunity to learn directly from experts.
- Updates on cutting-edge library technologies.
- Networking opportunities with colleagues from across the country.
- Preconference programs that provide in-depth coverage of hot topics and issues facing today's library professionals.
- An exhibits hall featuring more than 750 booths that will showcase the latest in new library products and services.

The conference will be held at Boston’s Hynes Convention Center. Preliminary schedule is:

- **Tuesday, March 21**
  Preconferences, Author Luncheons, Tours
- **Wednesday, March 22**
  Preconferences, Opening General Session, Exhibits Opening, Tours
- **Thursday, March 23**
  Programs, Author Luncheons, Talk Tables
- **Friday, March 24**
  Programs, Author Luncheons, Talk Tables, All Conference Reception, Exhibits Closing Reception

- **Saturday, March 25**
  Programs, Closing Session, Tours

For more information, visit our conference Web site at www.placonference.org or contact the PLA office at pla@ala.org or 800-543-2433, ext. 5752.

New PLA Publications

PLA has released the following publications:


Written by the Detroit Suburban Librarians’ Round Table Succession Planning Committee and published by PLA, this manual will help library boards better understand the process, consider the variables, envision their goals, develop a plan, work as a team, and achieve optimum results for their library. Makes practical suggestions on initiating a planning process, assigning responsibilities and tasks, examining the use of a consultant, advertising the position, and making the final decision.


This interactive, ready-to-use intellectual freedom training program for public library employees is based on American Library Association guidelines. Defending Access with Confidence provides libraries with step-by-step directions for planning and rolling out a comprehensive training program on access issues, and on how to resolve challenges to access. As a result of this training, library employees will gain an understanding of the history and philosophy of intellectual freedom in American libraries, and will be better able to identify and interpret library policies, and to recognize and respond effectively to challenges to access.

To order, call the ALA Order Department at 1-866-746-7252. For more information visit www.pla.org or call PLA at 1-800-545-2433, ext. SPLA.
the common thread that runs through the essays. The editor’s final article ties together all the essays by introducing and discussing the concept of the approval plan within the larger context of library acquisitions budgets and workflow, thereby forming a complete picture of collection development.

Editor Audrey Fenner has a wide-ranging background in academic, public, and special libraries in the United States and Canada and is the present head of acquisitions at Walter Clinton Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She skillfully guides the authors, who are professional librarians working or teaching in diverse settings, to articulate practical applications of CD in specific areas of expertise.

The authors highlight the many challenges they face building library collections in an environment of shrinking budgets and ever-spiraling costs. Although space does not allow for discussion of all the essays, the following examples are offered to provide an idea of the breadth of this work.

In a thought-provoking article, David Isaacson explores some of the conflicts faced by librarians charged with the task of building university literature collections and asks whether it is worthwhile to acquire ephemeral or potentially controversial materials, e-books, and hypertext fiction. Stephen Luttman provides an excellent thumbnail sketch of collection development in music, highlighting major selection resources for different media—books, scores, sound recordings, videos, periodicals, and out-of-print materials.

In her far-reaching discussion of academic art book collections, Elizabeth A. Lorenzen addresses the importance of considering the special needs of the studio artist when identifying and acquiring materials in support of an art curriculum. In a sentiment echoed to varying degrees by all the contributors, Lorenzen points out how technology, especially the Internet, has transformed art research from work that involved searching for images in art books or indexes to relying on online resources for accessing reproductions of art works or information about artists and their works.

Drawing on the experience of Canadian public libraries, Arthur G. W. McClelland discusses the importance of acquiring local history and genealogical materials for future generations and calls attention to their qualities as irreplaceable records of local history information. The challenges of creating a dental sciences collection quickly and with limited resources are described by Eva Stowers and Gillian Galbraith, while Janet W. Owens provides an authoritative review of tools for selecting nursing resources in four major areas: education, research, clinical care, and accreditation.

In her examination of health sciences acquisitions, Susan Suess concludes that the current trend of acquiring less for the general collection and more for the end-user should continue as budgets dwindle and the number of available titles grows. The multidisciplinary nature of public health information requires a unique approach to CD because content runs across many subjects and also because acquiring relevant materials is further complicated by the fact that what is considered a public health title is often a matter of opinion. Lisa C. Wallis presents a balanced overview of new and traditional selection tools, including an interesting discussion of the advantages of gray literature as a selection tool for public health information.

The ever-evolving field of media technology poses special problems for the acquisitions librarian, but Mary S. Laskowski demystifies CD in audio or video media information by recommending major selection and reference tools.

Overall, this volume offers lots of helpful tips for librarians with CD responsibilities in a wide variety of subject areas, especially those who work in academic libraries. Copublished simultaneously as The Acquisitions Librarian, numbers 31/32 (2004), the book is recommended for large public libraries and academic libraries that support a library school curriculum.—Diana Kirby, Librarian/Collection Management, Miami-Dade (Fla.) Public Library System

**Collaborative Collection Development**

**A Practical Guide for Your Library**


Collection development or management is the science of building library collections by containing costs while ensuring user access to valuable print and online resources. Collaborative collection development (CCD) expands on this premise by linking two or more libraries in a relationship of mutual trust, gain, and assistance with the objective of establishing interlibrary collective acquisition policies for the benefit of patrons at participating libraries. Collection development professionals at three research libraries with ten years of successful collaboration in the Information Alliance, a CCD program established by librarians at the...
The library. The CD-ROM proposes to improve areas of service in administrators through process.

This comprehensive work takes administrators to help increase library effectiveness, which assume that the social value of the library is a given. In doing so he identifies the core dilemma for the modern institution. Libraries have always been created and run by people who value the archiving and retrieving of information for its own sake. The public library, however, has an added mandate: to serve the information needs of the community that funds it. When consumers can turn so readily to broadcast and Internet media, public libraries need new approaches to measurement that will convince funding decisionmakers their services are still valuable.

Faced with this reality, we would welcome a handbook of practical guidance that has user and community needs assessment as its foundation. Matthews instead offers a compendium of research and literature, critiquing current American and British measurement methods in light of the new demand for public library accountability. He reports that there is, unfortunately, little correlation between conventional input and output measures or between either of these and measurable benefit to the community. What is measurable does not necessarily correspond with what is valuable.

Most traditional library measures are lagging indicators, descriptive of past performance rather than predictive of future outcomes. Such measures do not show cause-and-effect relationships between a library’s efficiency at performing tasks and its effectiveness at satisfying customers. Matthews devotes his second chapter to the challenge of redefining library “goodness” in terms of the needs, expectations, and perceptions of external stakeholders.

The third chapter surveys missions, visions, and values statements as well as approaches to defining strategic aims. The author contends that most libraries have a total disconnect between actual daily activities and their self-proclaimed mission statements and visions. He considers a range of strategic styles and focuses for correcting this problem. A brief chapter follows reviewing the categories of public library uses and users. A key chapter on input, output, and process measures, coupled with the exhaustive lists and definitions in the three appendixes, describes the basic tools of assessment. Matthews’ primary concern, though, is still the disconnect—even high use does not guarantee value or benefit. Accurate measurement of customer satisfaction is difficult, and it is complicated by two further challenges. First, customer satisfaction equals library performance minus customer expectation. Second, perceived satisfaction does not necessarily equal actual benefit. The chapter examines several strategies for addressing these complications.

The three chapters on benefits give a valuable survey of what we might want to be able to measure. Matthews introduces a framework devised by Tefko Saracevic and Paul Kantor for gauging the value of services based on the vocabulary of users. He then considers potential social and economic benefits, describing categories of benefit, naming possible output measures, and assessing which categories can be measured reliably. Again he concludes that it is very difficult to demonstrate direct causal links between library performance and benefits to the community.

The final chapters cover the integration of data into persuasive presentations for funding decisionmakers and the public. The challenge once more is that these stakeholders may have no real idea what constitutes a quality library. As a solution, Matthews advocates an organizational “culture of assessment,” where services are planned and delivered to maximize community benefits, and where staff uses a combination of tools to measure effectiveness successfully.

This is a frustrating yet necessary book. Rather than beginning with the culture of assessment and making the study of user needs central to a new model for evaluation, Matthews mentions both concepts only in passing. He gives us, instead, a doggedly academic critique of the status quo. For powerful examples of hands-on alternatives, the reader might turn to two books reviewed in the Public Libraries March/April 2002 issue, Identifying and Analyzing User Needs,

Matthews’ study is nonetheless important as a comprehensive examination of where library performance measurement falls short and what it needs to be able to accomplish. The book will be useful to library school students, as well as to researchers and professionals who want to revisit systematically the whole task of measuring to persuade.—Michael Austin Shell, Integrated Library Systems (ILS) Librarian, Jacksonville (Fla.) Public Library

It Comes with the Territory Handling Problem Situations in Libraries

The reality of public libraries today is that many situations come up that require special attention. These include children left at the library, inappropriate and possibly violent patron behavior, censorship, emergency medical needs, and much more. It Comes with the Territory provides a good overview of possible problems with details on plan and policy writing. Author Anne M. Turner outlines the realities of problem situations that she has encountered as director of the Santa Cruz City County (Calif.) Library System and in other positions.

The book begins with “Writing Good Rules.” Turner gives advice on how to use effective rules without overstating them to the point where patrons ignore them. Part two lists many of the problems that libraries encounter. The familiar ones are here, such as angry or mentally ill patrons, and censorship, but newer issues are also addressed, such as Internet misbehavior and predators. Each subject is also given questions to use for training staff on these issues.

Turner makes a point to describe the point of view of all patrons. A listing of “A Few More Tricks for Promoting Civility at the Desk” (41) includes particular ways to avoid embarrassing children, teenagers, and adults.

The sections called “Writing Good Manuals” and “Training Staff” make this title especially useful. More than fifty pages of sample policies are provided. Each situation in the book is given an example of a sample policy to address it.

This book is recommended for all public libraries.—Amy Alessio, Teen Coordinator, Schaumburg Township (Ill.) District Library

From Outreach to Equity Innovative Models of Library Policy and Practice

From Outreach to Equity is compiled by ALA’s Office for Literacy and Outreach Services and responds to ALA Past President Carla Hayden’s charge to “grant equal access to everyone, anywhere, anytime and in any format” (xi). Outreach programs are sometimes seen as outside regular library service and may be cut during difficult budget cycles. Editor Robin Osborne emphasizes that outreach programs need to go beyond their traditional confines. They need not be limited to programs outside library walls and should rely on consistent funding, rather than grants that have short shelf lives. Osborne challenges librarians to expand outreach programs beyond a few underserved populations, in order to provide “equitable service delivery” (xii). In other words, libraries should provide access to all users and potential users as part of daily operations.

The book is broken down into six parts. Each part represents a particular type of service: outside the library, inside the library, information technology, technical services, advocacy, and staff development. Each section has a short introduction to the type of outreach followed by successful models. Family language kits for new immigrants, bookmobile service to preschool children, consumer health information in twenty-four languages—are just a few of the services featured libraries offer their patrons. The majority of institutions represented are large and small public libraries with a handful of public colleges and universities. Short chapters and one-to-three page models make for easy reading. Reading the entire book would be most beneficial, but it is possible to browse through the models. The editors have compiled a useful collection of selected readings arranged by chapter at the back of the book.

An analysis of how these particular programs succeed in providing equitable service delivery where others may fall short would have been helpful. However, many of the models are inspiring and may cause librarians to re-examine their library policies and practices. Some of the represented programs entail large financial commitments—such as the “Words on Wheels and Traveling Library Center” at King County Library System in Issaquah, Washington, and the Free Library of Philadelphia’s after-school program—while others are quite inexpensive—participating in community events or training library staff in outreach skills. There is some discussion of obstacles encountered when implementing these models, but this is a book that is intended to generate ideas rather than provide concrete plans. Even libraries with solid outreach programs may find areas where they could improve access to all members of their community.—Tricia Arrington, Reference Librarian, Peabody Institute Library, Danvers, Mass.
Video Now Available on History Reference Center

Users of EBSCO Publishing’s History Reference Center can now enjoy easy access to more than eighty hours of streaming video content. The addition of fully integrated video content to the database serves as a unique complement to the extensive collection of full-text already provided.

This collection of motion picture film and videotape provides recordings of the social, political, and cultural history from 1893 to 1985. Fully searchable, the new video content is indexed with detailed reference lists and captions, dates, subjects, abstracts, the length of the video, and shot lists of the clips contained within videos.

EBSCO also provides individual library administrators with the option of deactivating this feature if they prefer.

DiscoverStation Turns One PC into Ten

Userful, a provider of public computing solutions, announces a unique Linux-based software called DiscoverStation that creates substantial cost savings for libraries. DiscoverStation turns one computer into ten and includes a turnkey suite of management software for public computing in libraries.

DiscoverStation offers a ten-to-one advantage over desktop computers. Using extra video cards, it enables up to ten users to work simultaneously off of one computer box.

Designed on the Linux platform, DiscoverStation is virtually virus-immune and tamper-proof, and is more secure and stable, with higher performance than traditional Thin Clients and PC networks. The locked-down environment of DiscoverStation blocks unwanted content access, downloads, and system changes. It automatically clears personal information and modifications between users to ensure that libraries are offering complete privacy to their patrons.

Serials Solutions Now Offers Federated Search Engine

Serials Solutions, a provider of e-journal access and management services, announced the availability of Central Search, a full-featured federated search engine.

Central Search allows patrons and librarians to search disparate digital resources from a single, easy-to-use interface, accelerating patrons’ introduction and access to their libraries’ collections.

Through a strategic partnership with WebFeat, Central Search software is able to connect to databases using WebFeat translator technology and technology developed by Serials Solutions. Central Search’s seamless integration with other access tools, including Serials Solutions’ E-Journal A.M.S., Full MARC Records service, and Article Linker, delivers comprehensive access to a library’s resources.

TLC Partners with Leapfrog Software to Offer Instant System Recovery

The Library Corporation (TLC) has partnered with Leapfrog Software, Inc., to offer Reclaim It, an instant system recovery program to libraries. Reclaim It utilizes a system image (“snapshot”) to offer fail-safe recovery from operating system corruption, faulty drivers, virus attacks, or failed upgrades.

Libraries can use it on public and staff workstations. Reclaim It can function from a server to offer complete network system protection. Libraries can even use Reclaim It to reboot public stations back to their original state after tampering by a patron or any other imaginable scenario.

Reclaim It users can configure the product to periodically (and transparently) take snapshots of the current state of the library’s system and applications software. Following a system crash, library staff can use the most recent, uncorrupted snapshot to reboot and instantly rebuild the system.

Blackstone Audiobooks and OverDrive Announce Maximum Access to Popular Audiobooks

OverDrive Inc. announced Maximum Access, an audiobook service for libraries that ensures that popular audio titles will always be available for download. Maximum Access is the result of an agreement between OverDrive Digital Library Reserve and Blackstone Audiobooks. It provides libraries with as many download copies of popular audiobooks as are needed to service the demands of their patrons simultaneously.

In response to the overwhelming demand for OverDrive Audiobooks, OverDrive now offers Maximum Access to audio titles with no limit to the number of annual patron checkouts, no risk of surcharges, and no waitlist. Maximum Access is also available for library consortia and shared digital collections.

Bluesocket and Sirsi Deliver WLAN Security for Libraries

Sirsi Corporation announced a partnership with Bluesocket, Inc., to deliver security and management to library wireless local area networks (WLANs). Bluesocket’s Wireless Gateways integrate seamlessly with libraries current infrastructure.
with Sirsi’s patron authentication servers, preventing unauthorized user access while allowing library patrons simple and secure authentication to the library’s WLAN network. Library administrators can control user access to its servers and services and manage bandwidth use on incoming and outgoing traffic.

www.bluesocket.com
www.sirsi.com

Audible’s Listeners Can Now Access Their Digital Content Anywhere in the World, From Virtually Any Internet-Enabled Device

Orb Networks, Inc. and Audible, Inc. have joined forces to bring even more flexibility to listeners of Audible’s Internet audio service. Using Orb’s solution, Audible customers can spontaneously access their home PCs from virtually any device that can connect to the Internet, such as a cell phone, PDA, or notebook, allowing them to listen to their downloaded Audible content at any time, from anywhere in the world. The media is simply streamed securely and directly from their home PC to the device to provide fast mobile media access.

www.audible.com
www.orb.com

Checkpoint Systems Introduces New DiscMate Solution for Digital Media

Checkpoint Systems, Inc. announced its new DiscMate solution for securing and circulating CDs and DVDs. DiscMate is compatible with any library automation system and offers significant benefits when paired with Checkpoint’s RFID-based Intelligent Library System (ILS).

DiscMate includes new one-piece cases for security and display and Standard Unlocking Units for use at circulation desks. There is also an Intelligent Unlocking Unit that works with the ILS and provides the option of allowing patron self-checkout of CDs and DVDs while maintaining security. When used with the RFID-based Intelligent Library System, Checkpoint’s new DiscMate solution now offers patrons the ability to check out CDs or DVDs on their own, without any assistance from staff.

Checkpoint Library Systems, Checkpoint’s new DiscMate solution now offers patrons the ability to check out CDs or DVDs on their own, with-...
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AquaBrowser Library doesn't just present search results, it maps concepts in a word cloud, inviting your users to discover or refine. AquaBrowser Library reinvents the search experience – so users can see what they're looking for.

You can offer AquaBrowser Library no matter what library automation system you use.
TLC also offers these other vendor-neutral products you can use with your current ILS: RFID, online acquisitions, and authority control.

http://www.TLCdelivers.com/AquaBrowser

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