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Editor's Note

Dear readers:

It’s been reported that during the current economic downturn public library circulation and visits have gone up, but now we are also hearing that more and more library budgets are dwindling. I hope the variety of articles and columns in PL are providing excellent tips and ideas, and making it easier for you to manage more with less.

You may have noticed that PL feels and looks slightly different. We have started using recycled/managed forest paper—check out our environmental impact statement below. Also, we have decided to move our year-end volume index online; you can find it soon at www.pla.org. As always we look forward to your comments, letters, and suggestions. Thanks for reading!

Kathleen M. Hughes, Editor

PLA PRESIDENT: Carol Sheffer, Queens Library, 89-11 Merrick Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11432; csheffer@queenslibrary.org.

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Corrections

In the Perspectives column on page 28 of the September/October 2008 issue of Public Libraries, in the essay titled “From the Other Side,” author Shirley Lang’s e-mail address should have been listed as morlang1@juno.com.

Also in that essay, it should have stated that Lang’s library conducts meetings according to The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure by Alice Sturgis, not “in conformance with Robert’s Rules of Order on parliamentary procedure.”

We apologize for these errors.

Kathleen M. Hughes, Editor (khughes@ala.org)

Kathleen is reading Ghost Train to the Eastern Star by Paul Theroux.
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News from PLA

Join the Conversation at PLAspace
As of November, five hundred registered users have logged on to PLAspace! PLAspace invites library staff members and others who want to take part in ongoing, focused discussions surrounding library issues. Communities of Practice (CoPs) have been added for groups interested in public library services for children and public library systems. PLA is continuing to make minor changes to the site based on comments and suggestions from CoP leaders.

If you are attending the Midwinter Meeting in Denver, PLA is offering CoP members an opportunity to congregate during the All Committee Meeting. Participation is not required, but PLA staff will discuss the future of PLAspace, as well success stories and best practices. The All Committee Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 25, 2009 from 8 to 11 a.m. (location information will be available in December). Visit www.plaspace.org for more information.

Check out the PLA CafePress Store
Visit www.cafepress.com/librarystore to see PLA's collection of distinctive graphics and products with a public library bent. Check back often, we plan on adding new products and designs frequently.

Missing Midwinter?
Read the PLA Blog
Check out the PLA Blog (www.plablog.org) during the upcoming Midwinter Meeting for detailed coverage of programs, social events, exhibits, and more. A team of PLA bloggers headed by PLA Blog Manager Nate Hill will fan out to bring all of the important details to our readers. If you will be at the meeting and want to help blog sessions or other events, drop us a line at contact@plablog.org and we'll give you all the details.

PLA Spring Symposium
Don't miss the 2009 PLA Spring Symposium, to be held April 2–4, 2009, in Nashville. The final registration deadline is February 13, 2009. The symposium will feature the following workshops:

- Service Responses: Selecting and Implementing the Right Mix for Your Library
- Silk Purses and Sow’s Ears? Assessing the Quality of Public Library Statistics and Making the Most of Them
- Today’s Library: From the Inside Out
- Libraries Connect in the 21st Century
- Current Issues: A PLA/CPLA Workshop
- Turning the Page: Building Your Library Community

In addition, the event will feature an opening general session, library tours, and an author luncheon. Musician Tom Chapin will headline the opening general session. Chapin has entertained audiences of all ages with original songs in an array of musical styles. Following the program, enjoy refreshments and mingle with colleagues at a reception. This event is free for all attendees.

Acclaimed author Adriana Trigiani will present the keynote address at the author luncheon. Trigiani’s popular Big Stone Gap series details the lives and loves of the residents of a small coal-mining town in Southwest Virginia. Her recent books Queen of the Big Time and Lucia, Lucia were New York Times bestsellers. Her next novel, Very Valentine, as well as her first young-adult novel, The Violet Chesterton Chronicles, will be published in 2009. PLA thanks HarperCollins for their support of this event. Tickets are available for an additional fee. Visit www.pla.org for more information.

On the Agenda

2009
ALA Midwinter Meeting
January 23–29, 2009
Denver

PLA Spring Symposium
April 2–4, 2009
Nashville

ALA Annual Conference
July 9–15, 2009
Chicago

2010
PLA 13th National Conference
March 23–27, 2010
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Escape From Bad Times

There has been a lot of talk in the media and in the profession about the increased use of public libraries during rocky financial times. Conventional wisdom, and statistical use, tells us that our customers want and need the job-related services that we can provide: resume writing, interviewing techniques, job search strategies, and more. Undoubtedly this is true. There is a tremendous need for financial literacy, too. We need to provide all of those services and more.

What I hope doesn’t get lost in our efforts to meet those very real demands, however, is the opportunity to offer an escape, too. Newscasts and newspaper stories are informative but can be depressing. When stressed by rising grocery, gas, and housing prices, as well as the potential of job loss, the public library can offer the escape some may be seeking. Free magic programs make families laugh, film programs make movies affordable, and live performances open up a cultural vista that is too expensive for many families.

Most importantly, libraries provide an escape through books. A book is the portable escape hatch that takes us wherever we want to go. We can struggle through the Civil War with Scarlett O’Hara, confront nature from a small boat with an old man, or laugh at the antics of a curious monkey named George. We can trek through foreign landscapes, cook with top professional chefs, and decorate with famous people. We can plan trips we may never take or share the struggles of a cancer or Alzheimer’s patient. We can visualize the life of a pioneer, whether that pioneer was traveling across the country in the 1800s, or fighting for civil rights and equality in the twentieth century.

So the question becomes, how can we get the right book in the hands of our customers? Readers’ advisory (RA) is the key. Not sure the best way to proceed? Not that familiar with chick lit or urban fiction? PLA has the answers. One of our first online Communities of Practice (CoPs) is focused on RA. Share ideas, learn from colleagues, and be inspired without leaving your office or home. Imagine developing your skills while cuddled in a blanket in front of a fire or sitting cross-legged on your bed in your favorite pajamas. That’s the beauty of a CoP! You can be heavily involved or just be a lurker. No matter how you do it, participating in a CoP will help you serve your community and give you a professional development experience at no cost. It is PLA’s way of helping you escape from the woes of the day. Visit www.plaspace.org to check out all of the CoPs, including RA.

Read a good book! 😊
BETSY DIAMANT-COHEN is the Children’s Programming Specialist at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. She is also the creator and author of *Mother Goose on the Loose* (Neal-Schuman, 2006). For more information on *Mother Goose on the Loose*, visit [www.mgol.org](http://www.mgol.org); bcohen@portdiscovery.org. Betsy is reading *Schooled* by Anisha Lakhani and Rambo and the Dalai Lama: *The Compulsion to Win and Its Threat to Human Survival* by Gordon Fellman.

CHERIE STELLACCIO is General and Vocal Music Specialist in the Music Education Division, at the Peabody Institute, Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; cherie.stellaccio@jhu.edu. Cherie is reading *My Stroke of Insight* by Jill Bolte Taylor and *Composing a Life* by Mary Catherine Bateson.

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**Do a Duet**

Partnering with Music Schools

*Under the banner of Children’s Book Week, the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore has partnered with the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University to create a unique program for children and their families.*

Every fall semester a new crop of junior-year music education majors at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University enter Cherie Stellaccio’s music and language class, a three-credit course designed to assist Peabody students to meet Maryland’s reading requirement for teacher certification. While proficiency on their instruments is a matter of course in this conservatory setting, the students generally enter their junior year with little comprehension of what music education is. While enthusiastic, they enter their junior year without a clear understanding of Maryland’s strict requirements for teaching. The possibility that they may have to teach reading at some point in their careers seems remote to them. Yet all education students, whether for general education or art education, have to take a minimum of six credit hours of courses in reading in order to be certified to teach any subject in the state of Maryland. These courses include techniques and methods of teaching reading as well as an overview of children’s literature. To offset the student’s lack of enthusiasm, Cherie has found that the quickest way to engage their interest is to connect them immediately to the world of children’s books, starting with the simplest books for toddlers and moving to books for young adults as the semester progresses.

Stellaccio’s announcement of the students’ first assignment, to walk three blocks to Baltimore’s downtown branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (EPFL) to get a library card and take out a children’s book, is generally met with startled looks. With a reminder to “Take your student I.D. and don’t forget a document containing your name and a local address,” they set off to the library’s children’s section in search of their first book, one that illustrates a well-known children’s song. Their homework requires them to critique a book in terms of its appeal to children, to describe how the book’s illustrations support the meaning of the text, or seeing whether the book includes both upper- and lowercase letters. Later, in the classroom, the students will stand up in front of their peers and praise the virtues of a book or expose its shortcomings, and explain how it might be used in a creative, educationally sound way in the classroom. In these sessions students might inform their classmates about the joys and virtues of books like *One Frog Too Many* or *The Big Sneeze*.

The first sign of a developing partnership between the EPFL and the Peabody Conservatory came when Stellaccio’s students told her that Selma Levi, the head librarian in the children’s section, had asked for a copy of the assignment instructions so that books meeting the weekly criteria could be pulled from the shelves. Since then, Stellaccio sends the librarian a copy of the course syllabus each semester; when her students arrive in the children’s...
room, they find the finest of new children's literature and old favorites prominently displayed in an area set aside for them.

Another piece of her students' course requirement is to observe a reading class in session. The second sign of a developing partnership came when Stellaccio realized that her students, now comfortable in the children's section of the library, were observing groups of children participating in the library's early-literacy programs.

In September 2005, Betsy Diamant-Cohen, children's programming specialist for the EPFL, spoke with these students, and asked them for the name and phone number of their professor. She then contacted Stellaccio and arranged to meet to discuss partnering possibilities as well as common interests. While Stellaccio was training students to become teachers, Diamant-Cohen was arranging programs for children and caregivers that were designed to promote early literacy. Diamant-Cohen told Stellaccio about the EPFL's Children's Book Week celebration and asked if her students might offer a musical program for the public. Stellaccio suggested using the Lloyd Moss book *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin* as the basis for a live-presentation interpretation. With the book-performance project, a collaboration truly began.

A date and two performance times were established for performances at the central library during the community-wide Children's Book Week Celebration. EPFL agreed to provide the space, amplification equipment, and advertising. Down the street at the conservatory, Stellaccio relayed the information to students, got them organized into small performing groups, recruited assistance in transporting large instruments, and set forth her expectations for the presentation. Requirements included dressing professionally and taking responsibility for organizing and rehearsing their presentations, which had to include instrumental or vocal performance and could not exceed the time limit set by the library. Following the performance, students had to submit a log of meeting and practice attendance, individual descriptions of their contributions to rehearsals and the presentation, and a detailed description of what they and the audience had gained from the experience.

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The first performance took place in November 2005. The students each gave their names, their home states, and the names of the musical instruments they were holding. Then each student played a few notes on the instrument to show the children how it sounded. A student narrator read aloud from *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin*, facing the audience and holding the book open while she read so that the children in the audience were able to view the illustrations as well as hear the story. Each time a musical instrument was mentioned, a Peabody student would play a short selection on that particular instrument. Following the cumulative nature of the story, after each instrument played a solo selection, all of the instruments that had been heard up until that point joined together to play a brief selection. At the story’s end, the entire “orchestra” was playing together.

The children watched attentively as the story was being read, and they asked many questions about the instruments when it was finished. When the formal part of the program ended, some children rushed over to the musicians to ask more questions and to touch their instruments. The Peabody students were not expecting this and at first, they were taken aback. Rather than saying “no” outright, however, they handled the requests with good grace by sharing instruments that were not fragile. A second class of Cherie’s repeated a similar program later in the day.

Based on the positive responses to this program, it was repeated at the 2006 Children’s Book Week celebration. Marjorie Priceman, illustrator of *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin*, had been invited to EPFL as a Children’s Book Week visiting illustrator. During the week she spoke at some EPFL branches, and on Sunday she attended the Children’s Book Week celebration at EPFL’s central library. There she saw the Peabody students’ performance and afterward spoke briefly about her book. She surprised the audience by mentioning that she had never before seen *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin* performed. Having the illustrator on hand for their performance was a treat for the Peabody students as well as for the families who attended.

Both the Peabody and the EPFL consider this collaboration to be successful. Stellaccio sees many benefits for her students. After this brief, real-life experience, the importance of early literacy and how it develops goes from the theoretical to the practical. As future music educators, the students learn how to plan interactive music lessons. Preparing this program for preschool and elementary children forces the students to step out of their comfort zones. New possibilities for integrating music with literature and for making books come alive for children are illuminated.

In end-of-semester course evaluations, students articulate their own ideas about how they benefited from the collaboration. They typically
express relief that they were able to keep the attention of preschool children for twenty to thirty minutes, and their amazement at the children’s fascination with the musical instruments. They also express astonishment at learning about the vast number of children’s books with a musical theme or relationship that are available at all grade levels.

Many students indicate that until they made their weekly treks to the library to select the assigned books, they had not ever considered the public library as a resource for teaching music. Overall, the students begin to view themselves not just as future teachers of music, but in the broader sense as teachers of children, who can do their part to contribute to the greater good of school and community. The students also appreciate the unanticipated opportunity to perform, which is important to them as future teaching musicians. They recognize public libraries as places for them to perform and to initiate musical programs designed for children.

This collaboration has also benefited the library. Through the participation of the budding musicians, the children of Baltimore have experienced a picture book in a new way; instead of simply hearing it, they have been able to experience it with many senses. The children embrace the post-performance personal interactions with the musicians when they ask questions, touch the instruments, and, in some cases, try playing the instruments. Such positive experiences can kindle a child’s lifelong interest in music and musical instruments. And, there is no cost for the performances.

Librarians enjoy seeing Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin presented in this new and unusual way. This type of program reminds librarians that they can do much more with books in place of simply reading them aloud. Stories can be drawn, sung, acted out, presented as a flannel-board program, performed by puppets, turned into a creative dramatics activity, set to music, tasted, and turned into a game. By seeing this presentation of Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin, librarians are reminded to try to present books in creative ways that take multiple intelligences into account. By observing the rapt attention of the audience, they are reminded that the child who may find it difficult to sit still for a traditional storytime might be mesmerized by other types of book-related activities.

The Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin program partnership was easy to form. It did not require an outlay of money and was beneficial to all concerned. The partnership succeeded because both the Peabody and EPFL were willing to step out of the box and take a chance with each other. They were willing to try a new idea, not knowing in advance what the end result might be.

There are a few simple steps to take in order to create a similar partnership at your library. First, identify potential partners. If college students come into the children’s department looking for books, find out who their professor is and make contact. Ask what you can do for them and tell them about the types of things that you do. Together, you may be able to find unexpected ways in which you can support each other’s educational goals. Don’t be shy about taking the initiative to contact new people and be willing to extend a lunch invitation to brainstorm possible projects. All it takes is being open for opportunities to partner. Do what you can, when you can, with the time you have. The results can be spectacular.
Sharing the Buzz
Dangerous Ideas @ PLA

The Pasadena Public Library (PPL) sent ten staff members to this year’s PLA National Conference in Minneapolis. This was a large number for us, but PPL’s director, Jan Sanders, was PLA president at the time, and as such, was presiding at this event, so we wanted to be sure and take it all in. When we got back, we sat down to think about how to share our experience. We remembered how excited we were in Minneapolis. We remembered how our brains were buzzing with ideas and enthusiasm. We wanted to capture that feeling and share it with the rest of the staff who were unable to join us at the conference. How to do that? We couldn’t import the entire cast of ten thousand attendees. We couldn’t reproduce all the great programs and conversations. We couldn’t recreate the endless idea sharing and brainstorming that made the air electric—or could we?

As we talked about what we considered to be the best of the best programs, one event kept surfacing, the program titled “Dangerous Ideas: What if Libraries,” which was held at both the physical conference and the PLA Virtual Conference. “Dangerous Ideas” challenged us to think outside the box, off the page, and even beyond the universe. The panel asked questions such as: What if libraries practiced the idea of abundance? What if there were no libraries? What if library catalogs were like computer games? PPL staff members were so ignited by this conversation that we determined it was the key to our own idea sharing now that we were back home.

So we set up a series of four sessions, each one centering on one of these key concepts: risk-taking, innovation, change, and communication. Then we posed leading questions for each of these topics. For risk-taking, what if we didn’t make our customers work so hard? Or, what if we canceled all of our programming efforts and just relied on our other services to entice users? For communications, what is the buzz at PPL? How can we translate that into fun?

As figure 1 indicates, each four-topic session was repeated four times during the month, ensuring that staff members would be able to attend a conversation about each of the topics if they desired. Attendance was the participant’s choice. We had fifty individual staffers (of a total staff of 140) who attended at least one session. In all, 157 attendees joined the conversation—obviously, many more than once. We invited other area libraries to participate and six sent staff members. The conversations were lively and varied. We rarely stuck exclusively to the topic, as ideas bubbled and raced. The folks who attended the PLA conference (either in person or virtually) led the comments by citing ideas or thoughts they had gained, wisdom they heard, or some other gem that had come to them. This sparked comments or questions, or ideas from other participants, and we were off!
One of the best parts of the sessions was the variety of staff members who participated. Not only did we get the entire library’s branch locations represented, we got many staffing levels. We had part-time assistants, full-time librarians, branch pages, managers, children’s workers, administrators, TIS staff, communications folks, and everybody in between. I don’t know that we have ever had such a chance to all sit down at the same table and just throw out ideas and suggestions. There was no real agenda except to share and learn; no subjects were excluded and nobody’s thoughts were discarded. That experience alone made it worth the time and energy.

We used the forum as a sort of brainstorming session, recording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 20</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>What if we implemented change with urgency and enthusiasm?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 20</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
<td>How can we step outside our traditional mind-set and really revolutionize library service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 21</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Risk</strong></td>
<td>What if we didn’t make our customers work so hard? What if we all but eliminated signs and handouts on our public service desks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 21</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Library service is local. Are we meeting local needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 27</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
<td>What if libraries were part of the discussions on attracting business to the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 27</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Risk</strong></td>
<td>Is programming worth it? What if PPL cancelled all of its programs, who would come to PPL and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 28</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>What are we good at that Google isn’t?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 28</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>Is there life after Dewey? Do we dare to change how we do things? Would this model work for us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 3</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Risk</strong></td>
<td>What if we earmarked a certain portion of our budget as a “risk taking” fund in order to try new or innovative ideas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 3</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>What would be the BUZZ of PPL? What fun can we translate into words for PPL?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 4</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>What if our focal point was the customer rather than the staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 4</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
<td>What partnerships would you/could you dream about or hope for PPL? Think BIG!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, June 10</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>How well do we communicate our programs and services to the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, June 10</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
<td>Is there life after Dewey? Do we dare to change how we do things? Would this model work for us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 11</td>
<td>9 to 10 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
<td>What partnerships would you/could you dream about or hope for PPL? Think BIG!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, June 11</td>
<td>12 to 1 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Risk</strong></td>
<td>What if we spent less time planning meetings and more time doing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** PLA Great Ideas Seminar Sessions
ideas and suggestions without any editing or comment. In the end, we had about twelve pages worth of suggestions. Some of them were intended to spark conversation and were not really plausible, others came up so often that we knew we were onto something. We’ve included some of the suggestions, just as ways to encourage others to offer up ideas they might use (see figure 2).

So, what’s next? We intend to implement some of the easier ideas. For example, we established an “innovation fund” for the 2009 budget cycle so that good ideas will have some resources. It’s not a great deal of money, but it’s enough to let staff know that they have a way to put legs under their suggestions.

We’re evaluating other ideas to see what fits within our strategic plan and what should be included in it. In other words, what supports our efforts and how can we make the plan even better? Some of the other remaining ideas could be assigned to an interest group for further consideration, handed back for more detail, or set aside for a time when we can fully implement them. We’re trying to respond to as many ideas as we can, even if all we can do right now is dream.

The conversations we began around the PLA reports have continued for weeks.

We may not use this format for “staff conference reports” for every single training session that we attend, but it seems to be a good way to allow participants to share what they learned and also gives the rest of us an opportunity to ask, learn, and build on what was shared. We hope it’s helpful to you as well.

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**Collections**
- Consider participating in a rental plan—renting books rather than purchasing them.
- Can certain parts of the collection be categorized like a bookstore such as audio books or nonfiction? Do we need Dewey numbers? How do we locate them if they aren’t catalogued? How do people locate books in a bookstore (that aren’t catalogued)? How do we handle holds?
- Need to unbury databases and make them more accessible and known to the business community.
- Place deposit collections at some of the homeless agencies. Expand our service/outreach to the homeless population.

**Customer Service**
- We make it hard for customers to find us and our services. Need to make it easier!
- Can we create a concierge service/instant messaging service to be where the customer is?
- Review current training practices to see if we are process orientating staff rather than training them to focus on the customer and their needs.
- Establish an outlet/commercial branch to serve the business community/downtown shoppers.

**Marketing**
- Create signs (library card or easily identifiable library graphic) and have volunteers serve as sign spinners. Then place them outside a branch to attract attention—alternate branches. Have a twirling competition.
- Send out weekly e-mail blasts of our upcoming activities to our e-mail list.
- Create banners/bookmarks that say “Free Wi-Fi.”
- Create a “welcome wagon” package for new businesses in the area filled with information on library programs and services.

**Programs**
- Make plans but be flexible enough to respond to “instant” programs.
- Partner more with the community and local businesses on themed programs.
- Buy a Wii for the library. Use for teen programs.
- Hold multilingual programs at the branches.

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**Figure 2. Suggestions from Great Ideas/Dangerous Ideas Sessions**
“Tales from the Front” is a collection of news items and innovative ideas from libraries nationwide. Send submissions to the contributing editor.

Marana Library Unveils Sculpture Made from Hundreds of Phrases

The town of Marana, Arizona, recently commissioned and installed an interesting public sculpture at the Geasa-Marana Branch Library. The sculpture, named “Wondrous,” includes hundreds of phrases taken from literature in English, Spanish, and O’odham (Uto-Aztecan language of southern Arizona).

The art piece consists of a long, folded panel of galvanized steel and includes roughly one thousand words jammed together in a way that encourages your eye to wander through it, creating new meaning from existing sources. Phrases were chosen from a wide range of literature plus oral histories of the settlement of the Marana area. The words are roughly 74 percent English, 24 percent Spanish, and 2 percent O’odham.

During the night, three of the world’s most powerful light-emitting diodes (LEDs) project intense colors through the words, casting overlapping shadows in six colors on the landscape around the sculpture and on visitors to the library. While there are many ways to understand this phenomena, some purely aesthetic, one interpretation is that we are inevitably imprinted by the words and phrases of the written culture that has come before us. The library is one place where that happens.

The sculpture gets its name from the first word in the upper left corner. “Wondrous” ended up there by chance in the course of arranging the phrases. It is taken from Charlotte’s Web by E. B. White: “the fact that this community has been visited with a wondrous animal.”

For more information, contact Steffannie Koeneman, community relations, at (520) 594-5610 or e-mail Steffannie.Koeneman@pima.gov.

Howard County Library Goes Green with Solar Panels

Howard County (Md.) Library’s East Columbia Branch recently installed twenty-four solar photovoltaic (PV) panels as part of the Live Green
Howard County initiative. The library is the first county facility to use the panels.

Each solar panel measures 5 feet by 3 feet making the total roof coverage about 500 square feet. The power generated from the panels, which were installed by Chesapeake Solar at a net cost to the county of $45,000, will be fed into the branch’s electrical distribution system. The system is expected to generate approximately 500 kilowatt hours (kWh) per month—more in the summer, less in the winter. In the first month of operation, the solar array generated more than 700 kWh of electricity.

The average American home uses approximately 920 kWh per month. Using the sun as an energy source also means the library has avoided emitting more than 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide.

In addition, the project serves as an environmental teaching tool, as the panels can be observed through an interactive workstation located at the customer service desk. A computer provides real-time data on how much power the PV cells produce and explains how the system works, positioning solar energy as a sustainable alternative energy source.

For more information, visit www.hclibrary.org or call Andrea Misner at (410) 313-7781.

Digital Bookmobile Debut Hosted by NYPL

The Digital Bookmobile (www.digitalbookmobile.com), a traveling community outreach exhibit for public library download services, kicked off a national tour last summer in Central Park with The New York Public Library (NYPL) (http://ebooks.nypl.org). The inaugural event allowed readers of all ages to experience digital audiobook, eBook, music, and video downloads from their public library and immerse themselves in an interactive learning environment. Events were scheduled at Queens Borough Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library in the days following the Central Park launch.

The Digital Bookmobile will travel coast to coast through 2009 promoting digital downloads at public libraries. Libraries in Boston, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Cleveland, St. Louis, Phoenix, and places in between will play host to the eighteen-wheeler as it weaves across America. A schedule of upcoming events is available at www.digitalbookmobile.com.

“Over 7,500 libraries provide millions of patrons with access to digital books through their ‘virtual branch’ websites, and with the Digital Bookmobile, libraries can promote their download service and generate new users,” said David Burleigh, director of marketing for OverDrive, Inc. “Readers of all ages will discover just how easy it is to browse, check out, and download digital audiobooks, eBooks, music, and video from their library with the Digital Bookmobile’s interactive educational sessions.”

The Digital Bookmobile, developed inside a seventy-four-foot, eighteen-wheel tractor-trailer, is a high-tech update of the traditional bookmobile that has served communities for decades. The community outreach vehicle creates an engaging download experience around the host library’s digital media collection and “virtual branch” download website. The vehicle is equipped with broadband Internet-connected PCs, high-definition monitors, premium sound systems, and a variety of portable media players. Interactive computer stations give visitors an opportunity to search the digital media collection, use supported mobile devices, and download and enjoy eBooks, audiobooks, music, and video from the library.

The Digital Bookmobile is hosted by individual libraries in support of their download services and operated by OverDrive. For more information about OverDrive, contact Burleigh at dburleigh@overdrive.com or call (216) 573-6886, ext. 218.

Immigrants Learn about Their Rights as Small Business Owners

The Seattle Public Library and the King County Bar Association’s Changing Lives through Literature

Changing Lives through Literature—an alternative to formal court action for Fairfax County, Virginia, teens and part of a year-long life skills program for adult offenders—was recently awarded both a National Association of Counties Outstanding Achievement Award and an Alliance for Innovation Award. The library program was launched in collaboration with Fairfax County’s Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court and the Virginia Department of Corrections, Probation, and Parole District 29.

It is designed to use the power of literature and reading to transform the lives of teens and adults. Weekly discussion groups of six to twelve teen or adult offenders, a probation officer, and a facilitator involve reading, reflecting, sharing, and mutual engagement.

For more information, contact katie.strotman@fairfaxcounty.gov.
Newcomer Resource Project presented a workshop entitled “Know Your Rights! Rights of Immigrant Small Business Owners.”

It was presented in English with Spanish translation. Speakers presented information about laws that protect small business owners and scams that target them and immigrants. Participants learned strategies for running small businesses and how to protect themselves from predatory scams.

For more information, contact Andra Addison, Seattle Public Library communications director, at (206) 386-4103.

State Library of Louisiana Offers Automation Training

The State Library of Louisiana (SLOL) partnered with LANTEC of Louisiana, LLC, a Microsoft Gold certified partner, to provide application training and technical consulting throughout the state. Through visits to Louisiana public libraries, they conducted several very successful consulting sessions and training classes on different applications software.

Sixty people received training and ten libraries have had a “consultant for a day” to answer questions on a variety of technical questions about servers, routers, networking, software, hardware, and just about anything else technology related. Comments from participants include: “One of the best things the State Library has done for the public libraries” and “Richard (The LANTEC consultant) was great!” So far, there have been ten consulting sessions and four training classes with more being scheduled. Funding for this project was received from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Staying Connected Grant and Public Access Computing Hardware Upgrade Grant.

For more information, call (225) 342-9713 or visit www.state.lib.la.us.

Freedom’s Sisters at the Sacramento Public Library

It would be difficult to imagine the course of American history without Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, Rosa Parks and her brave refusal in 1955 to relinquish her seat on a Montgomery city bus, or Fannie Lou Hamer and her courageous stand at a 1968 political convention. These stories of courage and commitment are among the many featured in the interactive exhibition Freedom’s Sisters, which opened in October and runs through January 4, 2009, in the Sacramento Public Library’s (SPL) Central Library’s first-floor lobby.

Created by the Cincinnati Museum Center, organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), and made possible through the support of Ford Motor Company Fund, the exhibition showcases twenty extraordinary African American women, inviting visitors to bear witness to some of the most important moments in our nation’s history.

Featured women include Ella J. Baker, Barbara Jordan, Constance Baker Motley, Mary McLeod Bethune, Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, Mary Church Terrell, Sonia Sanchez, Septima Poinsette Clark, Coretta Scott King, Kathleen Cleaver, Betty Shabazz, Myrlie Evers-Williams, Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, C. Delores Tucker, Dorothy Height, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, and Ida B. Wells.

“Our library is honored to host this extraordinary exhibition. We will be planning a variety of engaging and educational community outreach programs that reflect the exhibition’s theme,” said Anne Marie Gold, then-SPL director.

For more information, call (916) 264-2770 or toll-free at (800) 561-4636.

Check Out LibGig

LibGig is a (relatively) new website about jobs, careers, and community for information professionals—from archivists to taxonomists and everything in between: librarians, catalogers, directors, indexers, technicians, clerks, business managers, systems administrators, analysts and more. You’ll find jobs, career advice, everything about library school education, and unique content. Join the community and get in touch with news, jobs, the experts, blogs, and more. Libgig’s “Who’s Hiring Update” is a free semi-monthly publication about the hottest and newest jobs on the market for information professionals. The December 5, 2008, issue features information about job hunting during a recession. Check it out at www.libgig.com.
Meeting Rooms
All for One and One for All?

Article VI of the American Library Association's (ALA) Library Bill of Rights states that meeting facilities should be made available to members of a community on “an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.”¹ A library may control time, place, and manner of use, provided those statements do not discriminate against users—based on ideology or speech. Nice thought. Not so easy to practice when you are in the center of a controversy.

As the assistant director of the Lucius Beebe Memorial Library (LBML) in Wakefield, Massachusetts, several years ago, I booked a room for a group that said they wanted to meet to discuss the state of immigration in the United States. Several weeks later, the director and I learned that the group we had booked was actually the World Church of the Creator (WCOC), a white supremacist group based in Illinois. WCOC held its meeting, but we closed the library that day. The meetings were uneventful. However, the WCOC was known to attract violent counterprotesters in the past. Several days before the meeting, our library was routinely swept by police for hidden weapons. On the day of the meeting, streets surrounding the library were cordoned off because of threats to the group’s leader, Matthew Hale. Several communities lent police support, and the top of our quaint library sported SWAT team members with guns. Though there were only a couple of arrests and nobody was seriously hurt, the meeting cost the town of Wakefield nearly $30,000.

Elsewhere, there have been many challenges to meeting room policies and many libraries revise their policies in the wake of such controversies. In the LBML case, we added a local sponsor clause. Read on to hear more about meeting rooms in public libraries.

Blessing or Curse?

Krista McLeod (kmcleod@mvlc.org), Director, Nevins Memorial Library, Methuen, Massachusetts

Are meeting rooms in public libraries a blessing or a curse? Do our meeting rooms add to, or detract from, our mission? We have four meeting rooms, ranging from a small conference room to a hall that holds 250. Some days I wish we had more meeting rooms; other days I envy librarians whose libraries have no meeting facilities at all. Our meeting space is in high demand. We still book meeting rooms with a calendar book, and people seeking meeting space...
have to call the librarian to apply for space. We do this to make sure people understand the size of the space, and to find out who is booking the room and why. We require a local event sponsor, and have devised a hierarchy of use for the rooms.

One of the issues that has surfaced over the years is the ways in which the rooms are used. As a private nonprofit organization that serves as a public library, we sometimes have conflicts that traditional public libraries do not. We have grappled with the idea of using the library for religious services. We have granted requests by Christian Scientists who wished to have readings in our community. However, we denied a church who wanted to use our hall as their church every Sunday morning. We tend to flinch when political events come up, as we truly want to remain nonpartisan. We have given meeting room space on occasion to the board of our local Democratic committee, and would do the same for our local Republican committee, if one existed here. We have a fairly thorough policy which controls how many times a year a group can use the rooms, how much notice we need, and allows us to refuse an event based on its effect on library service and parking.

I am a great believer in libraries as places which build social capital in communities. Yes, indeed as the budget axe dangles above our heads in this difficult year, I am forced to think about the role our meeting rooms play in our array of services. I may be forced to review fees or rooms play in our array of services. I think about the role our meeting rooms can play in our array of services.

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The Houston Public Library (HPL) system serves a metropolitan area of 2.2 million people in 633 square miles. The system has forty-two service points, including thirty-five neighborhood and regional libraries, and a central library complex in downtown Houston. The combined resources of this library system serve more than 8.6 million in-person and online visitors, providing free access to information and entertainment.

Many of the library’s service points include public meeting rooms. In many neighborhoods, the library’s meeting room is the only publicly accessible space available. Currently, meeting rooms at any of the neighborhood and regional libraries are available for free and the central library’s Jesse H. Jones building and historic Julia Ideson building for a $15 fee per three hours with the following guidelines:

- Library-sponsored events take precedence over outside events.
- Any group may use a library meeting room designated for use by the public.
- Meeting rooms are not for personal use such as birthday parties or baby showers.
- Meeting rooms must be open to the general public.
- Publicity statements must not imply that attendance is limited to group members.
- No admission charges allowed.
- Solicitation for charitable or religious purposes are allowed as long as the donation is not required for event admission.
- Sales of goods and services are not allowed in the library.
- Permission to use the room does not mean that the library endorses the program.

HPL is currently reviewing meeting room policies. Revisions are expected to include a measure to allow for personal use or special events held after hours and to charge reasonable rates. Current library policy requires that the meeting rooms be used only during business hours. The recent construction of award-winning facilities and the pending renovation of the historic central library have all generated a large number of requests from public and private groups to use these facilities for special events outside library operating hours. We are confident that the revised meeting room policy will continue to provide equitable access to community groups while allowing the library to provide much needed special events space.

Conclusion
Do you have meeting rooms at your library? Do you allow the public to use them? Do you have a meeting room plan that will stand up against a lawsuit? Smart public library administrators have policies in place governing the use of those rooms. 

Reference
Video in Libraries

In our last Internet Spotlight column, you read about the music video we made, “Hi-Fi, Sci-Fi Libraries.” We had so much fun, we thought we’d do a sequel . . . well, at least a second column on video in libraries. This time, let’s talk about great uses of video in libraries. Why should your library use video to communicate with your patrons, and what are other libraries doing with online video?

But first, a little video background on us. David has been making online video since 2005. Usually, it’s for kicks, and David dumps the video into his videoblog (www.davidleeking.com/etc). Once in awhile, he collaborates with others, like with me, or with the American Library Association (ALA) (see “King of Conference,” available at http://alfocus.alan.org/videos/king-conference). David’s library also makes video—they create a variety of videos, including book reviews, local interest videos, and a couple of news-reporter-type videos about library-related events. They have even featured some patron-created videos, highlighting content patrons created during a program.

I have been busy training WebJunction users via online video. I have introduced the recently rebuilt WebJunction site using video, and created some videos that show various aspects of the new and improved WebJunction (www.webjunction.org/ getting-started).

Why Use Video?

You may be saying to yourself, “David and Michael, that’s great that you guys like to make videos. But why should we? Why should libraries make videos for their patrons?” Well, we think there are some great reasons to incorporate video into a library’s voice:

1. **People like watching video.** Have you experienced this—a good friend found something funny on YouTube, and it was passed around to you (and probably thirty other acquaintances) via e-mail? I sure have. For some reason, people enjoy watching video on the Web. This phenomenon is actually a small part of a larger “online video” revolution. Instead of turning on the TV and watching professionally made programs, people are turning in droves to online video sites like YouTube.
or Vimeo, and are watching one-to five-minute videos produced by amateurs. The video quality might be good, or it might be made with a mobile phone. It might include silliness or goof-ups, and not be nicely edited. Why are people watching online video? My best guess is that regular people are interesting, and people like watching what other real people have created.

2. **You can take it with you.** Not easily done with YouTube (though it can be done—search Google for “download YouTube video” for the details), but depending on the video service, many have the option of downloading a video to a portable video player. YouTube has created mobile versions of its service and will play on some mobile devices, like the Apple iPhone. Because of this you can take the video with you on the train or bus, and watch it during your commute. Because most Web videos are short, it doesn’t take much time at all to watch. Although if you commute to work by car like David does, we wouldn’t recommend much video watching—that might get you into a bit of trouble.

3. **You can rewind the librarian.** In a traditional training session, you can ask questions during the session. But you can’t really “rewind the librarian” as many times as you need until you get it. That’s a nice feature of videos, especially training videos. If you need to see something repeated, you don’t have to raise your hand to ask—you just hit that rewind button. And if you need it twenty times? You can rewind that librarian twenty times with no worries!

4. **Ultimately, it’s just great to see someone talk.** Websites can, at times, be a bit less than human. Full of bells and whistles, very modern looking, but without much in the way of human contact (though Web 2.0 is slowly changing that—sounds like a future column topic!). A video of a librarian, patiently explaining how to use a new library tool or service, can help your library’s online presence seem much more human, and much more like the actual library. That’s a good thing.

One other point here, more a reminder than anything: broadband is a must if you are going to make videos for your website. Thankfully, many of your patrons probably already have some form of faster-than-dial-up Internet access these days. And of course, most of your libraries do, too.

David knows this: when he first moved to Topeka, Kansas, he was stuck using dial-up at home while trying to get his DSL line set up. For kicks, David decided to see if he could watch a YouTube video over dial-up (yes, David really does do that type of thing for kicks). Guess what? It was unusable—a two-minute YouTube video took 45 minutes to load and watch. Broadband or better really is a requirement for Web video.

**What to Do With Video**
Now that you know why we think video on the Web is a great tool, here are some suggestions for you to ponder. What can you do as a library with online video? Here are some ideas.

**Obvious Stuff**

**Classes and Tutorials**
Need to teach your customers how to do something? Video is a great way to go. You can make short snippets of video that teach just what is needed, at the point of need. Put the video right where the question happens—in your catalog, by the databases, and so forth.

**Library Tours**
Do you have some type of virtual tour of the library on your website, complete with pictures and a map? Why not go one step further, and create a video tour of your library?

**Screencasts**
Training sessions are great—but no one wants to hear you talk about searching the library catalog without actually seeing it, do they? A screencast captures activity on your computer’s screen, and you can record your voice over that. This allows you to walk people through . . . well, anything on the Web. Your catalog, your databases, your website, how to search for some hard-to-find fact, anything. Here’s an example of a screencast from David’s library (www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRV4RXs8ksc).

**Public Relations**
Do you have events at your library? Make sure to record video of that event. You can then post the video to your library’s blog or website, along with a description of what happened, and even photos of the event. This has the potential to show patrons having a great time at your library, can visually show a successful program, and makes your library seem more human in the process (this is assuming the actual event was a success, of course).
Video provides a great, cheap way to create a PR video for similar future events, too. Once you have something captured on video, feature that clip on your website about two to three weeks before the next similar event, and show patrons what to expect. Here’s a video from David’s library showing Tamora Pierce providing advice on NaNoWriMo (www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYsZ40Wk7ZY). Next time NaNoWriMo comes around, or next time we have Pierce speaking, we can use this video as an introduction to the event.

Staff Training
Don’t just train patrons to use a new tool—use video and screencasting to help them learn. David’s library used video to introduce our strategic plan to staff (found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yf16q5fb9-A). The Allen County (Ind.) Public Library in Fort Wayne has also used videos fairly extensively for system-wide training sessions, especially for less in-depth skills the entire staff needed (like training on how to use the mildly complex new phone system).

Less Obvious Stuff
That was fun, and very obvious. What other fun things can a library do with video that you wouldn’t necessarily think about?

Team Building
Find other people in your organization or community that have things to share or would enjoy sharing on camera in your video projects. They will feel more involved with the library, the community, and the project. Also, involving others will ensure that they tell their friends and family about their video and draw in more viewers. A win-win situation.

Video Book Reviews
Why not create a one- to two-minute video book review? These can be creative, or be a talking head. Either way, your patrons will enjoy discovering new books. Check out Fort Vancouver Regional Library District’s “One Minute Critic” videos (at www.fvrl.org/findabook/oneminutecritic.cfm).

Staff Picks
Librarians tend to help patrons find things to read, but don’t tend to share their favorites with patrons. Other businesses do this—bookstores always have a “staff picks” section. Use video to share your library staff picks.

Videos of Community Events
Take your camera out into your community and start documenting what’s happening, then share. Especially if your library plays a part. Do you have a booth set up at the county fair? Capture this, then share it. It’s great PR, and shows your patrons what’s happening in their community.

What to Do in Your Community
Go one further than that, and take videos of neat stuff to do in your community. Visit the museum, the art gallery, or the local amusement park. Do a restaurant review—then on your library’s website, share links to cookbooks with the video of the restaurant.

Politics
It’s an election year—why not participate? Here’s an idea: pick an issue of importance in your local community, do a video interview of each candidate’s views, and share it on your website. In essence, you will have created a virtual town hall meeting, complete with candidates discussing issues.

Let Patrons Make Videos
Then go even one step further than that—give your patrons the camera and let them create content for you (while you go sip a latte)! A few ideas: have teens report on an event at the library, providing an overview of the event, and maybe even interview other teens. Then embed the video on your teen website. Or have the teens create video book reviews. Here’s one from David’s library—they worked with a middle school to make some book review videos (www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdGrceIajLo).

Classes on How to Do This!
One more—teach your patrons about video! You wouldn’t buy a library database and not teach your patrons how to use it, right? So if you are creating video, you should teach your patrons all about it, too. Have a class on YouTube basics: show the class how to watch YouTube videos, how to search for them, and how to set up subscriptions to video channels. In the process, teach them how to subscribe to your library’s YouTube channel.

As you can see, libraries can do a lot with Web-based video. Yes, there’s a small investment to be made (buying a video camera and editing software and taking the time to learn to use both). But it’s an investment well worth it. Give it a try!
**Enhanced Service beyond Tax Support**

An Argument for Temporary Rental Fees

One of the best arguments for public libraries is that we make it possible for everyone in the community to succeed at a much lower cost than any alternative. Whether a patron is in need of quality information or of entertainment contributing to quality of life, the library offers The Smartest Card. However, that message only works if the majority of voters in your area believe it to be true. The vast free popular and commercial Internet encourages public officials to question what we provide that is so different or necessary. Even if they accept that we support mandated public education with additional materials or local history, they may question why we should spend their public dollars on popular entertainment. The program described below both answers that question and guarantees that rich and poor continue to have access to these materials regardless of local priorities.

The quest for the almighty circulation statistic tempts public librarians with low book budgets to emphasize popular materials over quality reference or information. Not only is a high circulation often equated with success, but it’s an easy statistic for local government officials to understand. In order to capitalize on commercial hype, libraries have to provide as many copies as demand requires while interest is hot. The hidden reality, however, is that popular DVDs in libraries often end up lost or stolen shortly after purchase, and many copies of one-time bestsellers are discarded before they are a year old. Also, commercial outlets can often return unsold books or media, but library stamps and labels greatly reduce the resale value of former bestsellers.

Librarians who choose popular materials over quality information have to live with the fact that they have very little to show for their public money after a year. They make the choice to deny access to expensive, copyrighted, quality information in order to satisfy the entertainment needs of a small
but ravenous segment of their user community. In addition, the convenience of e-tailers like Netflix and Amazon, and the ubiquity of low-cost entertainment available online, erodes the library support base for this kind of hyped material. Why should a taxpayer vote to pay higher user fees for an institution they don't use or see the need for anymore? Furthermore, some local governments question the use of tax dollars for subsidized competition with book and video stores, when they are doing so at the expense of funding basic infrastructure.

I faced this dilemma two years ago as director of the Chattanooga-Bicentennial Library. We had chosen the primary role of “reference library” and a secondary role of “preschooler’s door to learning” in the late 1980s. We never had many copies of bestsellers, and did not begin buying DVDs until I became director in 2002. Patrons often waited more than six months on hold lists before they got access to a desired popular novel. It was not uncommon for the paperback copy to be released before the patron was able to check out the hardcover.

Over a long career, I’ve known a number of public librarians in poor areas who refuse to charge overdue fines, despite the loss of access to materials kept beyond the due date. There are several strong American Library Association (ALA) policies against charging for a basic tax-supported service. One major reason public libraries were created was to offer free and equal access to all local residents, regardless of their ability to pay. So when could a fee for access ever be justified in a tax-supported public library? One answer: When the material is not available in the tax-supported local collection.

Many pass on the interlibrary loan fees charged by owning libraries. The patron is asking for enhanced access beyond the local tax-supported collection. Though libraries cover all the bureaucratic costs of seeking out, obtaining, processing, and returning the requested item, they have no control over what the owning library will charge. The patrons must tell us how much they are willing to pay some other library for access before the initial request is processed. Why not extend this same courtesy to those willing to pay for enhanced access to other materials we cannot afford, especially when these same materials later become free for all?

One of the first things I did as director was to begin buying DVDs. I also purchased enough copies of popular books to reduce the number of patron hold requests to five per copy. While both had a salutary effect on circulation, budget limitations in succeeding years forced us to greatly reduce the number of reference books and periodicals we could offer. We were soon faced with the choice of ignoring our primary mission by focusing on DVDs and bestsellers, or completely ignoring the needs of those wanting these materials. I chose a third course by passing on the total cost for enhanced access to popular items in the form of rental fees.

Beginning with a $3,000 donation, we ordered copies of popular new DVDs for all branches and charged a $2 rental fee for each circulation. The justification to the public was that not a single tax dollar went to support these titles, the alternative was having none at all, and that all would eventually be converted to free copies. Not only were the DVDs soon entirely self-supporting, with the ability to buy as many copies of new titles as there was demand, but we took special requests from branch heads for other titles they thought would move in their communities. We made a profit of $14,000 the first year, and $21,000 the second.

We use the Chicago One Stop Browser Pak System, which minimizes both requirements for space and theft by displaying the cover art in a thick clear vinyl sleeve for browsing with a pocket for the separately stored DVD. The two are matched up at checkout. The downtown staff member managing this system researches demand and creates a networked spreadsheet of possible orders. Branch employees select what they want from the list, but can also make special requests for titles not listed. The DVD rental manager downtown keeps weekly statistics of use and the date the DVD was purchased. All rental DVDs are converted to free checkout within a year. Though patrons may not place holds on rental DVDs, many of the rental titles are available for free downtown and patrons may place holds on them for pickup at any branch.

Book rentals are also $2 and may not be placed on hold, but we always pay for one free copy that is available for holds. Patrons were used to rental charges for DVDs, but not for books and it took us two years to reach the point where the public bought into the browsing convenience and wide selection rental dollars made possible. We follow the same basic system of downtown research, branch feedback, and weekly statistics. Book rentals are now entirely self-supporting (formerly subsidized by DVD rentals), but just barely.

Make no mistake. This is “give the patrons what they want” on steroids. We call these rentals “on demand” because the primary criteria is not quality, or the library’s mission, or
even necessarily past library success with an author, but box office for films, and scheduled hype and wholesaler quantities/orders for books. We will often have a children's film that bombed with critics, but did quite well in the theaters and does well for us as a $2 rental. If you do not order in advance, provide a prime location near your entrance, promote films to your patrons, and order sufficient quantities of titles to keep that space filled with tempting products, you are wasting your time. Ideally, we use the weekly statistics to shift the titles from a branch with little use to a branch with high use. This is not a program for wishful thinking about "potential" popularity or one-size-fits-all. The people you select to run it should be receptive to branch suggestions, ruthless about the statistical evidence, and unsentimental about the selection criteria. If the average item selected does not circulate enough in six months to pay for itself, the program fails.

At first, those ordering were very choosy about titles they thought would move. Sometimes, a month would go by where, based on prior experience, they did not see a title that looked good to them so they didn't order anything. The patron saw a bunch of empty shelves and a very small number of titles to choose from. In the second year, we stressed having a good selection based on evidence of popularity (e.g., advertising budget, wholesaler quantity, bestseller lists) and basic in-library promotion (e.g. blurbs about the books, posted lists of the titles). We soon tripled the demand and the books now pay for themselves. The rental books are all converted to free copies after six months. The best copies of former rental books and DVDs are redistributed around our system based on the history of use as free circulating copies, space limitations, and library mission. The copies we no longer need are sold in our bookstore. We stopped using preprocessing from Baker & Taylor, because their method of gluing in our rental labels made it difficult to remove them without damaging the cover art.

Finally, the greatest barrier to access for the poor is never having the material at all. The legacy of this program is that all patrons eventually have access to free popular DVDs and books in all branches instead of continuing to sit on a hold list for a few downtown copies. In addition, we have preliminary evidence that our small rental fee for DVDs greatly reduces theft. We have found that popular DVDs may circulate thirty times or more as a rental, but end up checked out and never returned as free copies within a few circulations. Just as overdue fines encourage people to return material on time, the rental fee acts as a deterrent to casual theft.

This program is only for self-funded, heavily hyped, popular entertainment that may have a very short shelf life. Unless donors specifically request that their funds go into the rental program, the default is to use all donated funds to buy materials that will circulate for free. Almost all the rental items are movies or fiction. The program allows us to devote our tax-supported funds to quality information and children's materials in accordance with our mission and eventually help those looking for free popular entertainment.

One prominent librarian asked me whether I would discontinue the rental program if our book budget enabled us to buy anything we needed. I think it surprised her when I hesitated, but it is not an easy question. Presuming that the confluence of TV and Internet and digital downloads continues to progress as many experts suggest, are most local citizens going to vote tax dollars for popular entertainment in libraries that they don't use? Make no mistake, voters understand that they are being forced to pay a user fee whether they use it or not. How many charities serving the poor advertise anything but staples such as food, clothing, remedial education, treatment, and lodging when asking for money? The worst barrier to access would be permanently closing our doors because we depended on support from a majority who did not use the popular materials we bought with their money.

References

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

Now that’s
What I Call
(Digital) Music!

Let’s all feel old for a moment. Remember when you heard a great song
on the radio? Not an oldie, but a brand new song that suddenly every-
one was humming. It was usually some embarrassing pop song or
terrible hard-rock anthem. An unbelievably catchy song that the cool music
kids knew about months before you did and now nobody can get out of their
heads. Remember disc jockeys and VJs screaming about how many calls they
were getting requesting that tune, the song of the summer, the sound of the
year? Well today’s young adults don’t.

The digital music revolution has been a slow-motion explosion, detonat-
ing since Napster inventor Shawn Fanning decided that sharing would be
fun. The evolution from direct download file sharing to P2P to the torrents to
clouds to . . .

Enough with the tech talk. It only takes us so far. What about the music?
Teenagers today can hear almost any song ever recorded instantly. Go
search YouTube for any song, and I repeat—for emphasis—any.

Want to hear “Weird Al” Yankovic singing “Christmas at Ground Zero”? It’s
there. How about a fiddle interpretation of Pachelbel’s Canon in D Major? Or
Spanish-language renditions of “My Heart Will Go On”? Tuvan throat-singers
and Dead Can Dance, Diddy and My Bloody Valentine live in concert. How
about that one show where Fiona Apple got on stage with Nickel Creek and
sang a version of “Criminal”? Oh look, there’s a dozen versions of it.

Standing in stark, gob-smacked awe of the sheer breadth and depth of the
content online is cliché at this point really. But how teenagers are adapting to
the data glut is fascinating.

First off, forget about albums. Asking a teenager about an album is a bit
like someone asking you if you need a jaunty leather cap and goggles when
you head out for a drive.
Songs leak online in YouTube videos. The quality of these videos is often low, sometimes just a static image of the performer (or beautiful young women, or, for some reason, a shark) and serves to build excitement about a forthcoming release. These leaks are planned and tracked. The music industry might be publicly screaming and wailing through the Recording Industry Association of America but smart producers and record companies have been using the Internet to crowd-test music for years.

The ability to tap into any song, even those that haven’t been released yet, gives young adults a broader musical knowledge. I’ve written before about Guitar Hero (GH) as a great programming and promotion tool, but the playlists to GH and other games can serve as an excellent resource for bulking up the music collection. A young adult might never know which album Heart’s “Barracuda” came off of, but they know it’s one of the more challenging tracks on Guitar Hero III. Well, it was for me anyway, keeping that bass line was hard on my digits.

Speaking of the music collection, maybe it’s time to chuck it all together? Before you begin grabbing pitchforks and crafting your effigies, let me explain. CDs are a dying format and tapes have been gathering dust for years, so why not convert them to a digital format to share with patrons? Already many libraries are doing this with audiobooks, and even films, think of the works that are sitting on shelves, locked away from anxious audiences because their format is out of date? There are questions of copyright, but many works are out of print or have long since lapsed into the public domain, so it’s worth sorting through the stacks of CDs. A savvy YA librarian might even make the digital conversion into a program for young adults, giving them experience in archiving and helping them discover even more new music.

The song for me, the one on the radio that everyone was listening to and no one could stop humming? Limp Bizkit’s rendition of the George Michael classic “Faith.” That the current generation of young adults is spared the barely lucid screaming of Fred Durst while exploring a wide and varied world of music only further indicates to me that we are on the cusp of a new golden age.
THE
Urban
LIBRARY PROGRAM
BUILDING CAREERS WHILE REFLECTING CULTURES AND COMMUNITIES

DEBBIE WILLMS is New Services and Staff Development Manager, St. Paul (Minn.) Public Library; debbie.willms@ci.stpaul.mn.us; She is reading Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits by Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant.

MARY M. WAGNER, PhD, is Professor and MLIS Program Director, College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota; mwagner@stkate.edu; She is reading Learning in a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society by Carola Suárez-Orozco, Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, and Irina Todorova.

The Urban Library Program (ULP) is an intensive ten-month education certificate at the paraprofessional level that trains students from communities underrepresented in the library workforce to provide service in Minnesota’s Twin Cities’ public libraries. The ULP (http://mlis.stkate.edu/ulp), which evolved from a partnership between the College of Saint Catherine and the Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL), was awarded a substantial grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in 2003 to design the program and recruit its first two classes of students. Minneapolis Public Library (MPL) joined the original partners in a second successful proposal to IMLS in 2006 allowing the program to expand beyond its original vision. As of June 2006, the ULP has thirty-one graduates representing twelve nationalities and 61 percent are employed in libraries or pursuing other educational opportunities. The success of this program, the challenges it still faces, and the future of educating a diverse workforce will engage the partners for the foreseeable future.

The Partners
The College of Saint Catherine, founded in 1905 by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet, is the scholarly heart of the Minnesota library community. It confers associate, baccalaureate, and master’s degrees in many different subjects specializing in health care, liberal arts, and professional programs. At present, students may study for a master’s degree in library and information science (MLIS) at the college with the degree conferred by Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois. In January 2009, Saint Catherine’s anticipates accreditation for its own MLIS degree program by the American Library Association (ALA).
The SPPL system is comprised of a central library, twelve branches, and a bookmobile. The mission of the library promises to anticipate and respond to the information needs of the community, and it has endeavored to do so during its 125 year history. In 2005, the library received the National Award for Library Service from First Lady Laura Bush in recognition for its outreach and innovative programming. In spite of this excellent record, the staff of the library does not mirror the community it serves and the speed of demographic change threatens to far outpace attempts to correct this imbalance.

The MPL system is a highly respected community institution consisting of a downtown central library, fourteen community libraries, a literacy center, two technology centers, and a website offering visitors 24/7 access to information. MPL is now merged with the Hennepin County Library (HCL) system. HCL continues to partner with the ULP.

Genesis of an Idea

Two significant trends contributed to the creation of the ULP and both have their roots in the late 1980s. The first was the revolution in library technology, and the second was the unprecedented influx of refugees and immigrants from nonwestern countries to Minnesota in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The former required a strategy to upgrade the skills of library practitioners at all levels; the latter demanded nothing less than transforming a traditionally homogenous workforce to reflect the changes in the community.

The first of these trends was recognized immediately as a catalyst for change in the library profession and the library community mobilized to address it. Under the direction of the state office of librarians, library practitioners and educators convened to assess the preservice and continuing educational needs of library staff with emphasis on those employed in public libraries. A statewide education-needs assessment was conducted in 1990 and reported on by Carol Johnson for the Public Library Association (PLA). The resulting analysis led to the development of the Minnesota Certification Program (MCP), www.arrowhead.lib.mn.us/certification (see appendix A), which identified the competencies needed to work in Minnesota libraries. Defining these competencies drew together practitioners from all levels of staffing—support staff, MLS degree practitioners, library educators, managers, and regional library administrators. The competencies committee reviewed the literature on educational requirements for library support staff, certification, and licensure programs of other states and worked with position descriptions currently in use by Minnesota libraries. The libraries in Greater Minnesota (outside of the Twin Cities) embraced competencies as a way to provide consistent, high-quality training for staff who could not commit to the long, expensive process of attaining an MLS. In the Twin Cities, on the other hand, a glut of unemployed MLS librarians and budgetary pressures that discouraged offering incentives for completing the certification program meant that MCP was not a viable option for either staff or management.

SPPL adopted portions of the program and incorporated the concept of the competencies into its staff training and development and performance management programs. At the same time, the library administration working with affected labor unions tried unsuccessfully to provide compensation for the support staff members who completed the program.

While technology changed the way libraries approached their work, the changes wrought by immigrants and refugees transformed the very social fabric of the community. Unfortunately, a corresponding change in libraries did not occur. At the same time that the library community was working to define education for support staff, the face of the larger community was changing. The 2000 Census revealed what any teacher or librarian already knew: the face of Saint Paul/Minneapolis was changing with astonishing speed. New voices from Africa, Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East had joined those of Northern Europe in a rich cacophony of the world in microcosm. By 2000, Saint Paul had one of the largest populations of Hmong in the country. One hundred three different languages were represented in the public school system. In
the branches of SPPL, staff members were making library cards for families speaking Somali while also trying to connect Cambodian elders with programs to help them learn English. The library didn't just need a more diverse staff to reflect the community: it needed a more diverse staff to serve the community.

SPPL responded to these changing service requirements by redoubling its mostly futile efforts to recruit and hire diverse paraprofessional and professional staff. Since the early 1990s, the library had been quite successful in hiring clerical workers, but they—being mostly students—left to pursue other careers after high school. The situation with hiring multicultural paraprofessional and professional staff was far less satisfactory. The available pool of diverse applicants was very small, and internal rules that guarantee promotion made the task of hiring from outside the organization even more challenging. Every strategic plan for a decade had stressed the need to hire a more diverse workforce. Despite goodwill and earnest attempts at diversification, the revolutionary change in the needs of library users could not be answered by an evolutionary change in the workforce. It became apparent that nothing less than a radical and comprehensive change in recruitment and hiring strategies would help the library meet its goals. In early 2000, the fledgling MCP and the needs of SPPL converged to create a new model. A close relationship with the College of Saint Catherine provided the impetus to dream big to solve the problems facing SPPL.

The college and SPPL have enjoyed a long, close relationship. Many of the librarians at SPPL are alumni of the college, and library staff members have worked with college faculty on several important projects. As noted earlier, the two institutions collaborated on implementation of MCP. Their ongoing conversations often focused on how to educate library staff to meet the changing needs of diverse communities. In 2002, the library and the college began to develop the concept that was to become ULP.

The Urban Library Program

Three key concepts lie at the heart of the plan: experiential learning, recruitment, and serving a diverse community. In early iterations, the program was aimed at master's-level education, but it became apparent that the pool of baccalaureate-prepared candidates was small, particularly in relation to the immigrant/refugee communities. These communities often lacked familiarity with libraries and library careers. A graduate student in the MLS program at the college, Susan Haise, undertook a practicum to look at recruiting in the library profession. Her paper "Recruiting for Diversity" outlines many of the obstacles to hiring diverse professional librarians, not the least of which is that a pool of such candidates does not exist. As a result of this study, conversations with community leaders, and experience with recruiting graduate students, SPPL and the college determined that the key to long-term success in hiring depended on creating a diverse pool of paraprofessionals from which the next generation of librarians would emerge.

Once the decision was made to concentrate on paraprofessional education, the next task was to design a curriculum to meet the needs of both students and the libraries that would hire them. The partners had always known that their program would be based on the teaching-hospital model—classroom theory integrated with praxis rotations in a library agency. However, the duration of the program and its focus were subjects for study and discussion. Because the library and college staff had worked closely together to bring MCP into the library's training modules, developing ULP was a natural extension of the collaboration. The resulting curriculum was based on the competencies identified in MCP. At the
successful completion of the ten-month course of study, the college would award students a certificate in urban library services and twelve undergraduate credits. In addition, they would also earn the MCP certificate.

The ULP Curriculum
The curriculum was based on the broad outline of MCP competencies, but whereas MCP was designed for individuals already working in libraries, the ULP was created for students who had never really considered a library career. In addition, the target audience of the program was unlikely to speak English as a first language and might not even be a library user. The challenges in designing a relevant curriculum required the partners to distill the essence of librarianship and package it in a program that was engaging, doable, and effective.

The curriculum leading to the certificate includes six two-credit courses. Four are focused on libraries and library services and include four hours per week practicum experience in a library. Two courses provide instruction and practice in a language that is not the student’s first language. The languages offered are Spanish, American Sign Language, Hmong, and English Language Learning (ELL). The language classes are designed to develop a functional competency in the library setting and to promote cultural understanding in the language studied (see appendix B).

Recruitment
With a plan and a curriculum the question remained: If we offer it will they come? The answer, based on years of experience recruiting both staff and students was a resounding “No!” if efforts at targeted recruiting were not undertaken. The program administrator designed a comprehensive recruitment plan that has been very successful in reaching most ethnic communities in the Twin Cities. This plan included promotional materials, public speaking, personal interviews, public service announcements, and ceaseless networking with community leaders. Key to the recruitment efforts was frequent and continual presentations and discussions with adult students at the English language learning programs of the St. Paul Public Schools. The communications and public relations departments in the college and the library worked together to produce attractive and distinctive brochures that were widely distributed. The result of this effort was a threefold increase in applicants from 2004 to 2005 (see appendix C).

Diverse Communities
The third leg of the program is service to diverse communities. The ULP has successfully prepared a pool of candidates for employment; the challenge is to get them hired so that they can use their new skills, knowledge, and abilities with the communities they represent. This piece of the project has proven to be the most difficult. Some of the same organizational structures that protect and promote employees work subtly to thwart efforts to hire and retain a diverse staff. Dismantling what is, in effect, institutional racism and cultural egocentrism requires skill, finesse, and ingenuity among many stakeholders. The team undertook a study of minimum qualifications in St. Paul and worked with labor unions and the City of Saint Paul Human Resources Department to find creative ways to dismantle and circumvent the perceived barriers to hiring. As a result, Saint Paul has been able to hire six graduates in paraprofessional positions, four of whom would not have been qualified two years ago.

Early Results
The ULP has been successful on many levels, particularly in the curriculum offered and student performance during praxis rotations. However, challenges remain. An unanticipated challenge related to the students is the level and type of support required to ensure their successful completion of the program and entry into a work environment. These nontraditional students, both in age and previous educational and employment backgrounds, require high levels of attention from staff in both the academic and library environments. Library staff members who assist with the praxis need additional training and support to ensure continued high-quality oversight of the students working in the library agencies. Finally, continued funding of academic tutoring must be integrated more fully into the ULP.

Recruitment of appropriate candidates, though difficult, is on target. Successes in changing minimum qualifications in Saint Paul and other metropolitan libraries need to be replicated in order to complement the number of new graduates. Some argue that changing minimum qualifications lowers expectations for the paraprofessional titles. Further research on the experiences of the ULP graduates working in SPPL will address this concern.
Corresponding changes in curriculum and recruitment may follow.

**Future Directions**

Based on evidence from the work with minimum qualifications during the first grant cycle and with feedback from other library leaders, dismantling barriers to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse workforce remains a challenge in most library jurisdictions. Feedback from other Saint Paul city agencies indicates that libraries are not unique in this. As the second IMLS grant comes to an end, the work of the ULP team will involve widening their audience to include private- and public-sector employers, community leaders, politicians, and the philanthropic community as well as libraries, as the program becomes an integral part of their institutions. The goal is always to identify issues and to find solutions to reach our mutual goal of hiring a qualified workforce that also reflects the communities it serves.

**Conclusion**

The ULP is part of a very long-range strategy to increase a diverse and educated library staff. It has been successful because it leveraged the strengths and complementary missions of the SPPL and the College of Saint Catherine. The program continues to evolve and to include new partners, most notably the HCL. Students, faculty, library staff, libraries, and communities all benefit.

**References**


**Appendix A: Minnesota Certification Program, A Program for Library Employees**

www.arrowhead.lib.mn.us/certification

**Competencies: Level I**

**Philosophy Competencies**

A certified library employee is able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the mission and roles of libraries.
2. Demonstrate a basic understanding of a library serving its community.
3. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the broad historical perspective of the library and information professions as well as the tasks of specific positions.
4. Use trend analysis including environmental scanning to identify issues and developments, beyond librarianship/information science, which impact library services.
5. Monitor and respond to trends and developments within the field, including the use of appropriate technology in all library functions.

6. Demonstrate understanding of all functions within librarianship, such as public services, technical services, administrative services, and technology, and how these are interrelated with the production, distribution, and use of information. (Technology Competency)

7. Demonstrate awareness of and willingness to serve culturally diverse individuals.

8. Demonstrate knowledge of the legal, structural, and regulatory environments of the library, as well as the specific network environments in which the library interacts to enhance resource sharing. (Technology Competency)

9. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the role technology plays in the creation, retrieval, and delivery of library resources, functions, and services. (Technology Competency)

10. Demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate standards for various technologies. Be able to apply the standards and define their value. (Technology Competency)

11. Demonstrate understanding of the library’s role and responsibility for introducing applications of technology to the public. (Technology Competency)

12. Demonstrate knowledge and commitment to the
ethics and values of the profession, such as those advocated by the Minnesota Library Association and other local, state, national, and international professional associations.

13. Demonstrate responsibility for and commitment to self-assessment of expertise and conduct; professional development, including continuing education and staff development activities; and participation in appropriate professional organizations.

Public Service Competencies
A certified library employee is able to:

A. Public Services Abilities—Administrative and Planning Services
1. Design appropriate programs of service based on community use and needs studies.
2. Market library services.
3. Train or provide for staff training.
4. Explain circulation, intralibrary, and interlibrary loan processes, and illustrate their differences.
5. Explain library copyright requirements. *(Technology Competency)*
7. Explain the readers’ advisory process and how it differs from the reference process.
8. Incorporate computer-based resources and new technology in library services. *(Technology Competency)*
9. Demonstrate basic skills in the use of audiovisual equipment. *(Technology Competency)*
10. Demonstrate knowledge and use of appropriate computer hardware and software applications for library functions and services. *(Technology Competency)*

B. Public Service Abilities—Direct User Services
1. Communicate with individuals from diverse backgrounds.
2. Assess user needs and work to satisfy those needs.
3. Define and practice quality customer service.
4. Conduct appropriate, effective reference interviews.
5. Use basic reference, information, and referral resources. *(Technology Competency)*
6. Use basic readers’ advisory materials.
7. Use the entire library collection to satisfy user requests. *(Technology Competency)*
8. Is able to fill information needs by using resources beyond the immediate collection.
9. Matches format to the request. *(Technology Competency)*
10. Instruct users on the use of library materials and equipment. *(Technology Competency)*
11. Describe how people:
   a. communicate needs
   b. search for information
   c. receive information

Technical Services Competencies
A certified library employee is able to:

A. Collection Development and Management
1. Demonstrate knowledge of collection development and management based on the needs of the community served.
2. Recommend policies and procedures for selection, acquisition, circulation, maintenance, and weeding of library materials.
3. Support community activities with organized and accessible resources.
4. Demonstrate ability to evaluate electronic products and services and make appropriate recommendations for selection. *(Technology Competency)*

B. Acquisitions
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the publishing industry and vendor markets from which libraries acquire materials, equipment, and services. *(Technology Competency)*
2. Apply effective procedures for verifying, ordering, receiving orders, resolving problems, and accounting for expenditures. *(Technology Competency)*
3. Apply effective procedures for handling special materials. (For example, serials, electronic resources, and other formats.) *(Technology Competency)*

C. Cataloging and Classification
1. Understand the importance of identifying and locating materials in a library with awareness of end-user demands/needs for information.
2. Accurately describe an item to ensure proper access.
3. Select appropriate subject headings and call numbers for proper identification and placement.
4. Adhere to current and appropriate cataloging standards and classification schemes.
5. Be familiar with services to share cataloging information. (For example, OCLC, MNLink, Minitex standards.) (Technology Competency)

D. Processing
1. Apply appropriate methods and techniques for accurate physical preparation.
2. Apply appropriate methods and techniques for storage and preservation of materials. (Technology Competency)

E. Automation
1. Demonstrate knowledge of basic computer operations needed to use the local system. (Technology Competency)
2. Incorporate appropriate new technologies into technical services functions. (Technology Competency)

Approved June 23, 2000, by CLIME.

Appendix B: ULP Curriculum

Foundations of Library Service: The Urban Lens
Introduction to the history, philosophy, and principles of service in the American public library. Analysis of the role public libraries play in urban communities. Examination of competencies required for library careers. Six hours per week of library practicum in computer applications required. (2 credits)

Technical Services in Public Libraries
Introduction to collection management, including selection, acquisition, cataloguing, classification, processing, and collection maintenance. Six hours per week of practicum required. (2 credits)

Communication and Public Services
Introduction to public services provided by libraries, including circulation, readers’ advisory, reference, outreach, and children and young adult services. Oral and written communication skills are stressed. Six hours per week of practicum required. (2 credits)

The Urban Library: Community Lens
Analysis of the demographics and cultural practices of diverse communities served by public libraries. Focus on collaboration of libraries with community organizations. Six hours per week of practicum required. (2 credits)

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<th>Term 1—Fall</th>
<th>Term 2—Winter</th>
<th>Term 3—Spring</th>
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<td>September–December</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday 5–8 p.m.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundations of Library Service: The Urban Lens (2 credits)</td>
<td>Technical Services (2 credits)</td>
<td>Public Services (2 credits)</td>
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<td><strong>Tuesday 5–8 p.m.</strong></td>
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<td>Language course: ESL, Spanish, Hmong American Sign Language (2 credits)</td>
<td>Language course continuation (2 credits)</td>
<td>The Urban Library: The Community Lens (2 credits)</td>
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<td>Practicum rotations: (6 hours/week)</td>
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<td>Term 1</td>
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<td>Library automation:</td>
<td>Collection Development (3 weeks)</td>
<td>Reference (3 weeks)</td>
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<td>• SPPL computer system</td>
<td>Acquisitions (3 weeks)</td>
<td>Children/Young Adult services (3 weeks)</td>
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<td>• Computer skill assessment</td>
<td>Cataloguing/Classification (3 weeks)</td>
<td>Readers’ Advisory (3 weeks)</td>
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<td>• Computer skill acquisition</td>
<td>Processing (3 weeks)</td>
<td>Circulation (3 weeks)</td>
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Spanish or ASL or ESL or Hmong for Library Paraprofessionals I
Spanish or American Sign Language or English as a Second Language or Hmong instruction developing functional competency necessary to be successful in the workplace setting as a library paraprofessional. Placement test required. (2 credits)

Spanish or ASL or ESL or Hmong for Library Paraprofessionals II
Spanish or American Sign Language or English as a Second Language or Hmong instruction developing functional competency necessary to be successful in the workplace setting, as a library paraprofessional. Prerequisite Spanish or ASL or ESL or Hmong for Library Paraprofessionals I. (2 credits)

Practicum rotations at the Saint Paul Public and Minneapolis Public Libraries include:
Computer Applications in Libraries, fall term; Technical Services (collection management, cataloguing, and processing), winter term; Public Services (circulation, readers’ advisory, reference services, children and young adult services, and outreach services), spring term.

Appendix C: Student Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Ethnicity</th>
<th>Class of</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Multiethnic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004–05</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2005–06</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2006–07</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007–08</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries Represented by Students</th>
<th>Class of 2004–05</th>
<th>Class of 2005–06</th>
<th>Class of 2006–07</th>
<th>Class of 2007–08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
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</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age and Education Represented by Students</th>
<th>Class of</th>
<th>Age Range of Students</th>
<th>Education Range of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004–05</td>
<td>Early twenties to mid-fifties</td>
<td>GED to master’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–06</td>
<td>Late teens to early sixties</td>
<td>GED to bachelor’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–07</td>
<td>Late teens to mid-sixties</td>
<td>H.S. diploma to H.S. + C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007–08</td>
<td>Late teens to early fifties</td>
<td>GED, H.S. diploma, some college, bachelor’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment and Education Represented by Students</th>
<th>Class of</th>
<th>Employed in Public Library</th>
<th>Employed in Academic Library</th>
<th>Employed in Special Library</th>
<th>Employed in School Media Center</th>
<th>Studying for BA/BS degree</th>
<th>Studying for MLIS degree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004–05</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–06</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 and 1 continuing with language study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–07</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007–08</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is PLAspace?
The Public Library Association created PLAspace to better serve members by giving them an opportunity to share ideas, network, and explore their professional interests with their peers online. All PLA members can join or create Communities of Practice (CoPs), which represent groups that have come together for the purpose of discussing one topic pertaining to public libraries and public librarianship.

PLAspace features:
- Discussions
- Polling
- Chat rooms
- Events
- Project management tools
- Wiki pages

Log on and join the conversation at www.plaspace.org.

For more information, visit www.pla.org and www.plaspace.org.
Nearly every year since 1999, one hundred public libraries have been rated “best in class” by Hennen’s American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR).\(^1\) Many of the libraries have celebrated the occasion with glowing press releases, in-house banners, and communiqués with boards of trustees, funding authorities, and citizens. It seems fortunate that HAPLR has been available to certify the excellence of these select libraries. With the *LJ* Index, a new rating system from *Library Journal*, on the horizon, libraries will have another opportunity to ponder what ratings might mean for them.

When libraries consult ratings systems such as HAPLR or the *LJ* Index, they might assume that the scores are accurate and conclusive. Perhaps they envision them as *quality points* precisely calculated for straightforward comparisons between libraries. Thomas Hennen has promoted his ratings this way, describing them as “composite average[s] that can be compared to the score[s] of all other public libraries,” and “like a Scholastic Aptitude Test with a theoretical score between 1 and 1,000.”\(^2\) Measures involving *composite averages* and *theoretical scores* certainly seem like they would be statistically sound and trustworthy. By comparison, *LJ* Index takes an approach calling for more cautious interpretation of ratings and wider acknowledgement of their limitations.

How can these simple and inexpensive rating systems produce such definitive information about public library performance? How do the calculations work? How accurate are they? Do they measure library excellence and greatness? If so, how do they assess dimensions such as excellent customer service, well-trained staffs, responsiveness to community needs, quality and availability of materials, and others that have been espoused by Holt and by Childers and Van House?\(^3\)

A study addressing these questions was recently conducted as part of a library and information science graduate internship that the primary author (Lyons) completed at the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS).\(^4\) The coauthor (Kaske), who was director of surveys and statistics at the commis-
sion at the time, recommended that Lyons study the statistical foundations of HAPLR. The purpose here is to summarize the findings from the study. Some of the issues explored pertain to library ratings in general, including HAPLR and other approaches. These instances will be noted. Based on the study results, it is recommend that libraries reconsider their use of HAPLR as a measure of library performance, quality, greatness, or excellence. Several methodological shortcomings make HAPLR insufficient for these purposes:

- HAPLR is not a scientifically validated measurement instrument. Without validation testing, there is no basis for concluding that HAPLR assesses library quality, excellence, greatness, or value.
- HAPLR uses a set of library input/output measures that is too narrow for fully measuring library performance. As seen in table 1, HAPLR uses only five input and three output statistics. The ratings disregard service outcomes, library mission, service responses, alignment between programming and community needs, collection quality, and other key operational areas.
- Based on HAPLR calculations, 50 percent of a library’s score is dependent on library input statistics. It is generally agreed within the library profession that input statistics are inadequate measures of library performance, service excellence, programmatic relevance, quality, or value.
- The federal data that HAPLR uses are imprecise due to inconsistencies in local compilation of the data, sampling error, imputation, and other sources. Because of inevitable “noise” in the data, any comparative ratings based on these statistics will be approximate at best.
- Even assuming HAPLR to be a valid and accurate measure of library excellence or greatness, the scores cannot indicate how much excellence or greatness libraries might possess. As a result, comparing different libraries’ HAPLR scores in a single year, or the same library’s scores in different years, is somewhat pointless. This problem will be discussed later in the article.

**Not Like SAT Scores**
While Hennen does not claim that HAPLR is exactly like the SAT testing regimen, his association of the two measurement systems implies that they share certain characteristics in common. Upon closer examination, however, essential differences between HAPLR and SAT become evident. First of all, the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), creator of the SAT examinations, has conducted numerous scientifically designed studies to assess the validity of the exams. By validity we mean what the field of behavioral science research calls measurement validity, which has been defined as: “the extent to which any measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure. . . . One validates not the measuring instrument itself but the instrument in relation to the purpose for which it is being used.”

CEEB adopts a fairly narrow definition of SAT measurement objectives. SAT is intended only for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Statistical Data Used in HAPLR*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statistic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial subscriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation transactions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fifteen HAPLR factors are created from just eight NCES statistical items. HAPLR also uses population and hours open to calculate rates (e.g., visits per hours open), but libraries are not rated on these two items.
use in predicting first-year college success. Validation of the examinations has been predicated on this intended use. In addition, CEEB endeavors to ensure that SAT testing results are interpreted and used responsibly. The board explicitly advises that SAT scores alone never be used for college admission decisions. Instead, the scores are intended for use only in combination with other pertinent student data. Moreover, the academic community has been outspoken in insisting on appropriate use of SAT scores. Dozens of academic studies have investigated potential bias in SAT and other standardized education examinations.8

On the other hand, the measurement validity of HAPLR has not been substantiated, as we noted earlier. Consequently, there is no basis for concluding that HAPLR assesses library quality, excellence, goodness, greatness, or value. Both Hennen and the American Library Association (ALA), publishers of HAPLR, have neglected to issue consistent disclosures of the method’s limitations. Neither has Hennen or ALA emphasized the importance of interpreting rating results carefully and responsibly. Nor have they advised libraries of the necessity to supplement HAPLR findings with other relevant assessment data.

For these reasons, in terms of soundness, promotion, and use, we conclude that HAPLR and SAT are not alike. Besides this, HAPLR and SAT are also unrelated in terms of their statistical composition. SAT scores are interval data. Briefly, this means that SAT scoring has standard and consistent units of measure.

Unfortunately, this consistency does not hold true for HAPLR scores because they are ordinal numbers. Rather than having standard units, ordinal numbers are inconsistent. You might say they are elastic. The sidebar (see pages 40–41) describes this problem in detail and explains why it is so difficult to make sense of final HAPLR scores.9

**Shortcuts and Compromises**

The most distinguishing characteristic of HAPLR is the processing of library performance information in bulk. In the tradition of demographic and economic research, HAPLR aggregates statistics from thousands of subject libraries together with a single algorithm to produce mass comparisons. Translating each library’s input/output statistics directly into rankings avoids the considerable expense of more rigorous measurement approaches like onsite surveys, extensive questionnaires, validated measures of quality, or other meticulously developed evaluation protocols.

Interestingly, translating statistics directly into rankings is an ingenious shortcut that avoids a nagging problem in library statistical analysis. This problem, recognized decades ago by Ellen Altman and her colleagues, is the lack of explicit criteria for evaluating input/output statistics.10 There are no criteria defining exactly what levels of, say, circulation per capita or visits per capita correspond with excellent, good, satisfactory, mediocre, and poor library performances. Even though libraries are urged to make statistical comparisons with their peers, the profession has no tried-and-true methods for judging adequacy or deficiency of any given statistical indicator for any given library. To be sure, libraries may serve vastly different constituencies in terms of population, age, education, socioeconomic status, ethnic and cultural background, and so forth—within communities and among them. Determining what levels and mix of materials, programs, and services are most appropriate is a central challenge for libraries.

HAPLR and other library rating systems circumvent this problem by assuming that, for all libraries in all situations, higher statistics indicate higher levels of service excellence and appropriateness (except for efficiency indicators like cost per circulation). This illustrates an important characteristic of public library national ratings in general: Formulating these ratings always

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- Printed Salary Surveys—www.alastore.ala.org
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- Market data comparisons
- Performance reviews
- Job searches
- Statistics and trends
- Job descriptions

... an additional resource when presented with the challenging issues of salaries.” — Sara Zervos, Litchfield, IL Library
Even though libraries are urged to make statistical comparisons with their peers, the profession has no tried-and-true methods for judging adequacy or deficiency of any given statistical indicator.

Involves methodological compromises. As another example, national ratings like HAPLR ignore imprecision in library statistical data because adjusting for noise in these data is typically impractical. Thus, aggregated library statistics remain inexact due to inconsistencies in data compilation, sampling error, and other reasons.

As indicated previously, the collective nature of national ratings makes them especially insensitive to local library uniqueness and variation. HAPLR attempts to address this variation by rating libraries within community population categories. Other ratings systems may use different grouping categories. However, these methods do not account for such important differences as community demographics, library mission, service responses, regional economic factors, funding disparities, and others.

Perhaps the most profound methodological compromise connected with national ratings, and with comparative library statistics in general, is what has been described by statisticians as the creation of equivalences. Standardized statistical definitions require that a variety of objects or events be combined into categories that emphasize similarities and ignore essential differences between the objects or events. In the case of library statistics, all volumes, subscriptions, dollars expended, in-person visits, website visits, personnel, programs, and so forth are presumed to be equivalent within each statistical category. Each is worth one “point” in the counting. This overarching assumption discounts differences in complexity, sophistication, value, quality, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and so on. We leave this and other methodological compromises for a future discussion in order to address another topic, the usefulness of single-score ratings.

Single-Score National Ratings

Even if we could resolve the shortcomings and methodological compromises we noted, another dilemma remains. Hennen alluded to this in his characterization of national ratings of the “best” cities, hospitals, colleges, and graduate schools as “subjective and open to infinite interpretation.” In reality, there are no objective guidelines for designing measures to gauge the excellence of cities, colleges, graduate schools, hospitals, libraries, and the like. Creators of national rating systems make arbitrary decisions about which factors to include or omit, and whether to give extra emphasis to any of the factors they select. Intentionally or not, each scoring decision favors certain locales or institutions over others.

When the Places Rated Almanac first appeared in 1985, AT&T Bell Laboratories statisticians analyzed the measurement scheme. The statisticians examined weightings—a statistical technique for emphasizing some measurement dimensions over others—that the Almanac used. In an experiment, they found that by manipulating these weightings they could cause any one of 134 cities (of 329 total) to rate first in the rankings. A recent study described similar patterns in national rankings of regional economic conditions. This study reports that thirty-four U.S. states are able to cite national rating systems that place them in “the top ten” in business climate and competitiveness.

While national rankings are arbitrary, they can also be somewhat imprecise. Year-to-year behavior of rankings can even be transitory. For graduate business school ratings published by Business Week and U.S. News and World Report, University of Michigan accounting professor Ilia Dichev observed that annual changes in ratings revert back to their prior ordering within a two-year period. The same proved true for U.S. News and World Report college and university rankings. Dichev suggests that this tendency is due to statistical noise, meaning that short-term changes in ratings are likely to be more of a fluke than an indication of actual changes in institutional quality.

Certainly, marketing and public relations are crucial for cities, universities, hospitals, libraries, and other institutions. National rankings can be valuable tools for institutional advocacy. By the same token, public institutions have a responsibility to increase operational efficiency, quality, and effectiveness. Due to their generic nature, national ratings do not...
A Primer on HAPLR Calculations

HAPLR calculations begin by assigning libraries to peer comparison groups based on community population size. Then, for each library, HAPLR combines eight library statistics (see table 1 on page 37) in different ways to produce fifteen separate measures, which Hennen calls “factors.” For instance, the single statistic total annual library visits is used in the measure visits per capita and also in the measure visits per hours open. Next, each library’s fifteen measures are compared with those in its peer group. Example results from this step appear in the first row of table 2 for fictitious Cityburg Public Library. Because all fifteen measures are calculated in the same way, only four measures appear in table 2 to save space.

In table 2, note that Cityburg Public Library’s expenditures per capita measure is $11.50. For this value the library receives the rank of 147th place as shown in the second row of the table. In this manner, comparisons are made for measure #2, measure #3, and so forth so that a ranking is calculated for each of the fifteen measures.

HAPLR calculations then proceed using the fifteen rankings depicted in the second row of table 2. In the first row of the table, the actual statistical measures are discarded. Finally, the fifteen rankings are added together as shown here:

CITYBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY HAPLR SCORE = 147th place + 210th place + 94th place . . . + 87th place = 650 points

Actually, this formula is a simplification, although it accurately describes how HAPLR works: Each library’s fifteen measures are replaced with fifteen rankings and then the rankings are summed. As a result, final HAPLR scores are sums of rankings. The scores are still ordinal data because the fifteen rankings from which they are derived are ordinal data.

Ordinal data do not represent standard units of measure. Rather, ordinal data are irregular and elastic. One way to think of an ordinal scale is as a peculiar sort of yardstick. With this yardstick a given length—say ten inches—located at one end of the stick can be a different length than ten inches located at the other end! And ten inches in the middle of the yardstick can be a length that differs from the other two ten-inch lengths. Similarly, the difference between two scores from HAPLR’s measurement scale—say, ten points between 420 and 430—is not necessarily equal to a corresponding difference elsewhere on that scale—say, points between 520 and 530 or between 660 and 670. Since ordinal scales have units of measure that are elastic, score differences that appear to be equal may not be equal at all.

The Oddities of Ordinal Numbers
Why do ordinal numbers represent such irregular and elastic quantities? A familiarity with rankings and contests can help us solve this riddle. Rankings in contests do not directly indicate contestant perfor-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cityburg Public Library</th>
<th>HAPLR Measure #1: Expenditures Per capita</th>
<th>HAPLR Measure #2: Percent budget to materials</th>
<th>HAPLR Measure #3: Materials expenditures per capita</th>
<th>HAPLR Measure #15: Circulation per visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Input/output statistics</td>
<td>$11.50</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
<td>$1.09</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankings</td>
<td>147th</td>
<td>210th</td>
<td>94th</td>
<td>87th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Input/output statistics are replaced by the library’s ranking among peer libraries. Measures #4–#14 (not shown) are calculated in the same manner as the measures shown.
mances. That is, they do not represent actual timings in races or judging points awarded in dance competitions, for example. In a highly competitive contest, participants might all perform excellently, causing the top scores to fall quite close to each other. In a less competitive contest, top scores will be further apart and mediocre performances might well receive high rankings. Nevertheless, in these different contests top performers receive the same numeric rankings—first, second, third, and so on. Clearly, the numeric rankings have quite different meanings in different contests.

As ordinal numbers, rankings communicate order only—nothing more. Although it is tempting to view the numbers in rankings—first, second, third, fourth, and fifth—as regular numbers, the digits are merely placeholders that spell out a sequence. This sequence can just as easily be represented as Ath, Bth, Cth, Dth, and Eth. These two representations of a five-point ranking scale are identical in meaning, since points on ordinal scales are just labels.

Ordinal scaling is entirely different from everyday measurements. Because they are just labels, ordinal scaling points have no standard quantitative meaning. This is why HAPLR scores cannot indicate exact quantities that libraries possess of greatness, excellence, quality, or whatever library attributes HAPLR might actually measure. One library’s advantage of, say, twenty HAPLR points over peer libraries could mean that the library surpasses other libraries by a large amount of excellence, by a moderate amount, by a small amount, or hardly at all. This uncertainty also applies to comparisons between libraries in different peer groups, and between a single library’s year-to-year changes in HAPLR scores. It is even conceivable that one library’s lower score in one year could represent more excellence than that library’s higher score in a different year.

Due to the oddities of ordinal numbers, we can draw only these conclusions from HAPLR scores: In a single peer group and single year only, higher HAPLR scores exceed lower ones by an unspecified amount, and vice versa. Although the ratings appear to be precise numbers that can be compared confidently, their actual meanings are vague and fuzzy.

What’s the Point?
You might wonder why we belabor this issue of HAPLR scores as ordinal data. After all, no measurement system is perfect. Couldn’t we simply accept the shortcomings of library measures like HAPLR? Despite its imperfections, isn’t HAPLR the best measure of its kind currently available? In our view, such a lenient stance will ultimately work to the detriment of libraries. Instead, we suggest that libraries endeavor to promote higher standards of measurement soundness in order to preserve their institutional credibility. At a minimum, the profession ought to avoid showcasing measures that are likely to embarrass libraries later on. And we should strive to remedy measurement flaws that would otherwise be obvious to expert observers. As Elliot and his colleagues advise, library measures must hold up under expert critical review, particularly by those outside of our profession. Further, libraries should always interpret assessment findings conservatively, tending toward understatement rather than overstatement. If the library profession upholds standards for rigorously developed assessment measures and justifiable interpretations of data, our “stewardship, service, and integrity” will be obvious to our constituents.

References and Notes
2. HAPLR calculations adjust the data so that numerically low rankings, like first and second place, earn more points than higher rankings, like eightieth and eight-first place. For clarity we have omitted this adjustment from our formula. With or without this adjustment, the numbers in the formula are ordinal rankings.
4. Ibid., 36.
enhance local evaluation efforts, nor are they much help in refining programs and services. In fact, they sometimes undermine the practice of sound evaluation research. In response to *U.S. News & World Report* college and university rankings, some academic institutions choose to “game” the ratings by reporting exaggerated statistics. Defensive tactics like these end up obscuring organizational performance rather than illuminating it. Undoubtedly, this level of preoccupation with otherwise arbitrary rankings distracts organizations from the task of conducting well-designed local evaluations aimed at performance improvement.

### Telling Which Way the Wind Blows

Hennen remarks that “Numbers alone can no more tell you everything about a truly great library than the wind chill index can tell you about a truly cold day.”¹⁶ This disclaimer notwithstanding, national ratings such as HAPLR are perceived as saying something about each public library. The challenge for the library profession is to determine exactly what this something might be. Without scientific validation and sufficient measurement scope, public library national ratings based on aggregate statistics are unsatisfactory measures of quality, greatness, goodness, excellence, or value. Further, imprecision in the underlying data make ratings inexact, causing final scores to be much more approximate than they appear. Even if they were accurate, single-score ratings are not useful for meaningful performance, improvement, and accountability. Worse, the ratings can be interpreted in ways that misrepresent or trivialize organizational quality and excellence.

What, then, do library ratings say? Generally, our profession recognizes that ratings are rudimentary measures. The ratings may well signal library accomplishments, but the information they provide is preliminary and cursory. Library ratings indicate that libraries meet some of the prerequisites for quality, excellence, greatness, and value. Thus, they can suggest that libraries appear to be on the right track to performance results, if we accept the definitions of performance implied by the mix of the statistics utilized. By themselves, however, ratings cannot confirm these results.

Richer sources of information for public library management, marketing, and advocacy are soundly designed local evaluation studies, including customer surveys, performance measures, assessments of library value, quality management regimens, outcome studies, and others. For this reason, we propose that libraries continue to utilize data that are available from national surveys as a foundation for local assessment efforts, and add to these additional output measures that are currently not collected nationally.¹⁷ Especially, the use of e-resource outputs (numbers of downloaded articles, webpage hits, database users, and so on) should be included. Data such as these are key to demonstrating how libraries add value to their communities. More importantly, libraries should strive to develop outcome measures—both quantitative and qualitative—in their assessments of how they fall short, meet, or exceed organizational targets and goals. National ratings can play a part in library evaluation as long as we acknowledge their strengths and limitations. Beyond their use in library advocacy efforts, ratings should inspire libraries to identify local evaluation questions needing further exploration.

Utilizing local data to demonstrate library accomplishments is worthwhile because it focuses on locally derived value of library services. The library’s ability to return value to customers is one rating system that libraries must be well attuned to. Customer opinions and votes are the only scores that take away or add to the resources libraries require to operate at a high level and to strive for greatness. ![Editor’s note: The opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect the view of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or other parts of the U.S. government.](https://example.com)

### References and Notes

1. Hennen decided to forgo publishing 2007 HAPLR ratings.


5. Since its scores are comprised of nine output and six input measures, HAPLR appears to stress output measures more. However, based on statistical weightings built into the calculations,
the HAPLR scores are made up of 50 percent input and 50 percent output measures. See Lyons, “Unsettling Scores,” 58–60.


17. Input/output statistics from the Public Library Statistics Cooperative (formerly the Federal-State Cooperative System) may be accessed via the Institute of Museum and Library Services (http://harvester.census.gov/ims/index.asp), the National Center for Educational Statistics (www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/public.asp), and the Public Library Geographic Database of the Florida State University College of Information Science (www.geolib.org/PLGDB.cfm) (all accessed Oct. 27, 2008).

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**Flight of the Conchords** films at Brooklyn Public Library

Recently, the cast of HBO’s *Flight of the Conchords* were all at Brooklyn Public Library’s Williamsburgh Branch, filming for their upcoming season, which airs in January. In the scene, the duo performs—not surprisingly—in a library, to the chagrin of regular patrons. After this portion of the shoot, they headed to Sunset Park to film more of the episode in an area under the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, and brought their own hookers (well, extras dressed as hookers, anyway).

Tracey Mantrone, manager of the Williamsburgh Branch, had this to say:

Although I don't watch much television, my sister is a big fan of *Flight of the Conchords*. I was therefore happy that not only was her favorite show filming in my library, but I would be able to watch. Little did I know that I would find myself not only dismantling most of my computers, but also helping to shelve books. The film crew, while struck by the beauty of the building, decided that it did not look enough like a library. So they replaced the computers with temporary book shelves, which we stuffed full of donations to create an old-time atmosphere. Then the extras, dressed in frumpy cardigan outfits and clunky shoes and wearing owl-like glasses, began to arrive. By the time filming began, the entire building had developed a carnival-like atmosphere as a bemused public complimented us on the extra shelving and waded among the film crew to check out their DVDs for the weekend.

Then the filming began. For the next hour and a half, we all suffered through a bizarrely catchy song sung over and over again by the two lead actors while the extras did their best to look like traditionally frumpy librarians. . . . I’m looking forward to watching the upcoming episode, although I still can’t get that song out of my head.

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*Source: Brooklyn Public Library*
As it happened at your library? A patron approaches the reference desk and hands the librarian a piece of paper that looks remarkably like a doctor’s prescription. Further inspection confirms that it is a doctor's prescription, but for information, not medication. In the upper right-hand corner are the words, “MedlinePlus.gov—The Website Your Doctor Prescribes.” Information Rx is a patient/consumer health education program developed by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the American College of Physicians Foundation (ACPF). The goal of the program as stated in the online project summary is “to provide information and tools to assist physicians in referring their patients to an authoritative, user-friendly commercial-free Internet site, NLM’s MedlinePlus (www.medlineplus.gov) for patient-oriented information.” Materials publicizing the Information Rx program state “Your local public library has computers to access the Internet at no cost. A librarian also can help you find answers to your questions and assist you in searching MedlinePlus.”

Begun as an “information prescription pilot experiment” by ACPF and NLM in 2002, the “Health Information Referral Project” was first initiated in Iowa and Georgia in 2003. Its goal was to provide physicians with the tools—printed information prescription pads and resources, and trustworthy, online information—needed to “prescribe” quality health information for their patients. Reformatted as Information Rx, the information prescription program was expanded to Virginia in January 2004 and announced nationwide at the annual meeting of ACP in New Orleans, April 22, 2004.

From the point of view of the physician, the overall goal of the Information Rx prescription program is “improvement in patient education and patient-provider interpersonal interaction.” Specifically, the program is designed to (1) help patients prevent debilitating diseases, understand a new diagnosis, become comfortable with a new treatment plan, or better manage a chronic condition; (2) improve patient-physician communication and interaction; and (3) encourage compliance.

Consumer Health Information and NLM
Information Rx is not the first effort of NLM to facilitate the dissemination of consumer health information. In 1997 NLM announced free access to its Medline database via the Internet. Previously, Medline had been available only to subscribed users who were required to login with a user ID. Within one year of launching their open-access policy, NLM noticed that 30 percent of the searches conducted on Medline were completed by...
members of the general public. Given that Medline indexes primarily biomedical and clinical journals aimed at physicians and other professionals who can access full-text copies of the articles through medical and research libraries, it became evident that there was a need to provide more comprehensive, full-text health information targeted for consumers through the NLM website. The result—MedlinePlus.gov—came online in October 1998. In 2002 this outreach was expanded further when NLM introduced a Spanish edition of MedlinePlus, and each year since the site has grown in its depth and coverage of health topics.

MedlinePlus.gov: The Website Your Doctor Prescribes

True to its advertisement, MedlinePlus.gov is “an authoritative, user-friendly commercial-free Internet site.” As one librarian commented after exploring the site, “I don’t think I’ve ever encountered such a comprehensive website on any one subject area before.” Designed as a “gateway” or “information portal,” the information provided on the MedlinePlus site must meet strict quality and accuracy criteria. To insure that these standards are met, an advisory group of twenty-five professionals from the National Institutes of Health and other health-related organizations serve as a peer-review board. As new information becomes available, the site is updated, often several times a day. Outside websites linked to the MedlinePlus site must also meet NLM quality standards (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/criteria.html). Additionally, sites cannot endorse or sell health products and services, and they may not require that personal information be given for access to information.

Currently, the MedlinePlus site covers 750 health topics in depth and provides information on many others through Ready Reference resources such as a medical encyclopedia and medical dictionary, and an A–Z browse database covering drugs and supplements. Special accessibility features include interactive tutorials, easy-to-read articles, audio functionality on many pages, scalable text size, and a contrast adjustment on some screens for users with macular degeneration or other vision problems.

Public Interest in Finding Health Information Online Is Increasing

Mary L. Gillaspy, writing in Library Trends in 2005, noted several factors for the increase among American adults searching for online health information. These factors include (1) increased access to the Internet as more Americans purchase computers for home use and as public libraries have “become wired through grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation since 1996,” (2) the increase in the amount of health information available online, (3) the realization that American lifestyles are leading to serious health problems, even in the young, (4) the maturation of the consumer health movement, and (5) ubiquitous health news as “a staple of television news shows, newspapers and magazines.” An additional factor, not included in Gillaspy’s list, may also be an increase in the amount of direct advertising for drugs and other health products aimed at consumers in magazines and television commercials, each with websites for more information.

The impact of these factors is described in a recent report from the Pew Internet and American Life Project. In August 2006, Pew surveyed Americans regarding their online health-information searching behavior (see figure 1). Findings show that 80 percent

Eight in ten Internet users go online for health information.

Eight million American adults look online for health information in a typical day.

The typical search for health information starts at a search engine, includes multiple sites, and is undertaken on behalf of someone other than the person doing the search.

Most health seekers are pleased about what they find online, but some are frustrated and confused.

Three-quarters of health seekers do not consistently check the source and the date of the health information they find online.

Successful health information searches may bolster health-information seekers’ confidence.


Figure 1. Online Health Search 2006: Summary of Findings at a Glance
of Internet users, or 113 million adults, search for health information online. Generally, these searchers are women under the age of 65 and persons who have broadband Internet connections in their homes. Additional results of the survey provide a cautionary tale for both librarians and health-care providers. As Susannah Fox writes in the report summary, “Most Internet users start at a search engine when looking for health information online, and very few (15 percent) ‘always’ check the source and the date of the information they find.” These findings raise several red flags with respect to the information literacy skills of most Americans seeking online health information, particularly the common use of search engines to initiate a search and the low incidence of searchers checking for site authorities and currency.

The Pew study did not question the searchers’ criteria for assessing the quality of the information they found on the Internet. Recent studies of websites providing information about kidney transplantation and postmenopausal osteoporosis indicate that much of the information found online is poor in quality. Given the ease with which information can be uploaded to the Web, one can extrapolate from this research that information regarding other health topics might be questionable as well.

**Partnering with Public Libraries to Improve Health Information Literacy**

Erica Burnham said, “The health care industry, medical researchers, and funding agencies haven’t realized the potential benefit that libraries and librarians offer when addressing the issue of health literacy.”

“Health Information Literacy” as defined by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.” Additional factors that determine an individual’s health information literacy include the ability to read and interpret technical information such as food and drug labels, or the directions on prescription medications, as well as the ability to perform quantitative tasks such as determining a healthy weight range for an individual based on that person’s height and Body Mass Index (BMI). These additional components of health information literacy were incorporated into the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy conducted by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (see figure 2).

Findings published in 2006 reveal that while 65 percent of Americans possess intermediate to proficient health literacy, the remaining 35 percent lack the ability to read and understand even the most basic medical instructions, i.e., “determining what time to take a prescription medication when the label states to take the medication with food.”

**e-Health Literacy**

The IOM definition of health information literacy cited above omits an individual’s computer-literacy skills, and perhaps more importantly, his or her general information literacy skills, i.e., the ability to read, understand, and critically evaluate the quality of health information found on the Web. In this broader context, e-Health Literacy can be defined as “the ability to seek, find, understand, and appraise health information from electronic sources and apply the knowledge gained to addressing or solving a health problem.” Implied within this definition are “six core skills or literacies: traditional literacy, health literacy, information literacy, scientific literacy, media literacy, and computer literacy.”

Low literacy and e-Health literacy skills, particularly among older Americans and ethnic and racial minorities, became abundantly apparent with the roll-out of the Bush Administration’s Medicare prescription drug program in 2006. As early as September 2005, enrollees were urged to call for information or go online to find “personalized information at www.medicare.gov” but by May 2006 complaints had become so numerous that Congress enlisted the Government Accounting Office (GAO) to conduct a complete review. One of GAO’s major findings was that printed documents and pamphlets about the program were written on a seventh-grade to post-college level, while 40 percent of seniors could only read “at or below the fifth grade-level.” Of the Medicare website, the report concluded that 70 percent of the detailed aspects of the Part D portion of the site “could be expected to cause users confusion.”

In a 2006 article detailing the problems many African American seniors faced when reviewing their Prescription Drug Plan options, Ericka Blount Danois commented, “The new Medicare Part D plan is complicated and has even those in the medical field baffled. Just think how seniors felt when given the May 15 deadline to enroll.” African Americans, she noted, were particularly vulnerable to missing out, “as one of the primary vehicles in getting signed up for benefits was by logging on to the Internet, and that... only 11 percent of African Americans aged 65
Calculate an employee’s share of health insurance costs for a year, using a table that shows how the employee’s monthly cost varies depending on income and family size.

Find the information required to define a medical term by searching through a complex document.

Evaluate information to determine which legal document is applicable to a specific health care situation.

Determine a healthy weight range for a person of a specified height, based on a graph that relates height and weight to body mass (BMI).

Find the age range during which children should receive a particular vaccine, using a chart that shows all the childhood vaccines and the ages children should receive them.

Determine what time a person can take a prescription medication, based on information on the prescription drug label that relates the timing of medication to eating.

Identify three substances that may interact with an over-the-counter drug to cause a side effect, using information on the over-the-counter drug label.

Give two reasons a person with no symptoms of a specific disease should be tested, based on information in a clearly written pamphlet.

Explain why it is difficult for people to know if they have a specific chronic medical condition, based on information in a one-page article about the medical condition.

Identify what it is permissible to drink before a medical test, based on a set of short instructions.

Circle the date of a medical appointment on a hospital appointment slip.


**Figure 2.** Difficulty of Selected Health Literacy Tasks: 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy
and older use the Internet compared with 22 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 21 percent of English-speaking Hispanics.”

As Vail Miller writes in the American Journal of Bioethics, “If e-Health is to realize its potential for improving the health of the public, the gap between what is provided and what people can utilize must be acknowledged.” Programs such as Information Rx and the joint Woman's Day/American Library Association (ALA) public library health information essay contest will challenge public libraries to fill this gap by providing not only access to the Internet for these disadvantaged populations, but more importantly, assistance in finding online health information by teaching e-Health literacy skills and providing consumer health reference for those unable to search for information on their own.

Providing Consumer Health Reference Services at a Local Public Library

While health sciences librarians are specifically trained to provide consumer health reference services, many staffing the reference desk in public libraries may feel uncomfortable doing so. This is understandable, given the issues of privacy, confidentiality, medical ethics, and malpractice liability that are embodied in the provision of consumer health-information reference services. Many general reference librarians are unfamiliar with medical terminology, and often patrons are unable to articulate clearly their specific request for information. Further complicating the reference interview and search process are the low health-information literacy levels of many Americans, not to mention patrons who speak English as a second language. In a similar vein, many public libraries may not have the facilities to provide privacy for patrons accessing online medical information and utilizing the many multimedia features offered on the MedlinePlus site, i.e., the interactive tutorials and videos with sound. To assist in meeting these needs, NLM charged its national network of health science libraries to begin exploring ways to partner with local public libraries in their regions to improve access to consumer health information at the community level.

NN/NLM: Outreach to Public Libraries

In 1998, NLM expanded its mission to include outreach to public libraries. Planned to coincide with NLM’s introduction of MedlinePlus.gov, the Public Library Pilot Project involved thirty public library systems in more than two hundred locations across nine states and the District of Columbia. Goals of the project were to increase awareness of the MedlinePlus website and also to “help NLM determine the feasibility of launching health information programs in public libraries nationwide.”

To respond to this change in mission, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) began to recruit Consumer Health Coordinators responsible for “providing health information outreach to the public through public libraries and community agencies.” Today, each of NN/LM’s eight regional offices supports this goal. The scope of training and continuing education workshops available through the NN/LM regional network is extensive. To access more information about NN/LM’s training, visit the National Training Center and Clearinghouse (NTCC) website at [http://nnlm.gov/ntcc/about.html](http://nnlm.gov/ntcc/about.html). Listed on this site are NTCC’s objectives, contact information, and a link to their Educational Clearinghouse Database. Educational resources and training opportunities are searchable by audience (health professional, information professional, or general public), content, and format (classes, tutorials, factsheets, webcasts).

In a further step to broaden its mission, NN/LM opened its membership to affiliate members—public libraries and other community organizations that provide health information services to the public. As affiliate members, public libraries can take advantage of free training and access to resource sharing. An overview of NN/LM’s partnerships with public libraries and community groups is found under Outreach on their website (http://nnlm.gov/outreach/community). Contained on the site are online guides to resources for providing health information services, initiating a community health information program, and funding opportunities.

Dancing Rabbit e-Library Health Initiative—Reaching Libraries in the Mississippi Delta

In June 2007, the Roberts-LaForge Library at Delta State University (DSU) in Cleveland, Mississippi applied for and received an Express Outreach Award from the Southeastern/Atlantic Region of NN/LM. The purpose of the award was to plan and present six training workshops for public librarians, school librarians, and members of the general public that addressed e-Health Literacy. Topics included (1) how to evaluate health-information websites, (2) why
using a search engine might not be an effective strategy for finding quality health information, and (3) a discussion about commercial websites and direct drug advertising to consumers on search engine result lists, i.e., “sponsored links.” The workshops were also designed to introduce the Information Rx program and to cover the many extensive features of the MedlinePlus website. As an NN/LM network member library, the Roberts-LaForge Library supports the BSN-RN and MSN-RN programs at the university’s School of Nursing. The Dancing Rabbit e-Library Health Initiative expands upon DSU’s ongoing role of providing leadership and training throughout the region.

Located in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, DSU has maintained a long-standing relationship with the region’s public libraries. In 2001 the Roberts-LaForge Library was instrumental in the creation of the Dancing Rabbit Library Consortium, a cooperative library network that includes ten county and regional library systems, one independent public library, two community college libraries, and two state university libraries. The consortium is named for a historical gathering place of the Mississippi Choctaw Nation—Chukfi Ahila Bok, translated “the creeks where the rabbits dance.” Numerous trails converged in this area, according to Herbert S. Halbert, a local historian, and the site included a council house, ceremonial grounds, and a cemetery prior to 1830. The spirit of Chukfi Ahila Bok continues in the consortium that bears its name and was honored by the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) with their Multi-type Library Cooperation award in May 2004.

From its beginnings, the Dancing Rabbit Library Consortium has emphasized resource sharing and ongoing staff development among its members. Following in this tradition, three of the six Dancing Rabbit e-Library Health Initiative workshops to date have been held at locations throughout the Delta—Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale, B.S. Ricks Memorial Library, Yazoo City, and First Regional Library in Hernando. Others include training for VISTA and AmeriCorps volunteers in Cleveland, and two continuing-education credit workshops for school librarians offered in conjunction with the Mississippi Library Commission on the DSU campus.

Summary
For more than a decade, NLM has spearheaded the effort to provide open access to quality health-care information for consumers in the United States. By utilizing the members in its network, NLM has extended its resources and outreach to public libraries and community groups throughout the nation who are daily providing health-information services to their patrons and clients.

NLM recognizes the significant role public libraries have in their communities. It has been estimated that on average 5 to 10 percent of all reference questions at public libraries involve consumer health. During times of crisis, as in the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in Toronto in 2003, public libraries literally become a lifeline for the concerned public.

While there is no lack of health information available on the Web, the Pew Study and the National Assessment of Adult Literacy report on health literacy confirm that many Americans struggle with, and may be overwhelmed by, what they find online. Research has shown that poor health literacy can have devastating effects not only on individuals and their families, but also in overall costs to the nation’s health-care system. In an article published in The American Journal of Bioethics in 2007, Angelo E. Volandes and Michael K. Paasche-Orlow provide these sobering conclusions:

Limited health literacy has been shown to be a more powerful predictor of health status and health-related behaviors than race or education. . . . Limited health literacy is associated with low health knowledge, increased incidence of chronic illness . . . and less than optimal use of preventive health services. . . . In other words, the rate of death for those with limited health literacy was approximately twice the rate of death among those with adequate literacy.

In 2003, Erica Burnham advocated for “strong partnerships between academic health science librarians and public librarians.” This need is no less urgent today. Due to the efforts of NLM and its regional network, mechanisms are in place to build these relationships in 2008. Working together, Information Rx may truly become a prescription for health.

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Join the Public Library Association (PLA) at this unique event, April 2-4, 2009 in Nashville, Tennessee. The Spring Symposium combines PLA’s highly-regarded educational programming with the opportunity to meet and mingle with your colleagues in a more intimate setting than the PLA National Conference. The 2009 Spring Symposium will feature seven day-and-a-half-long workshops, an opening general session, an author luncheon, local library tours, and more!

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- Workshop 3: Silk Purses and Sow’s Ears? Assessing the Quality of Public Library Statistics and Making the Most of Them
- Workshop 4: Today’s Library: From the Inside Out
- Workshop 5: Libraries Connect in the 21st Century
- Workshop 6: Current Issues: A PLA/CPLA Workshop
- Bonus Workshop exclusively for PLA members: Turning the Page: Building Your Library Community

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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

JOSEPH R. MATTHEWS is an instructor for the School of Library and Information Science at San Jose State University; joe@joematthews.org. Joe is reading Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits by Leslie Crutchfield and Heather Grant.

On average, a public library will lose from 25 to 30 percent of its customers every three years. Yet, in almost all cases, such a startling fact goes without any notice by the library director, staff members, or the board. If there is any discussion of these “lost” customers, it is in the context of a brief footnote in a monthly report that notes “X number of customer records were purged from the library’s automated system.”

Given such an alarming loss of customers, why is there so little discussion or concern within the library community? Several reasons come to mind. First, most libraries track and report on the number of new customers who have come to the library and obtained a library card. For many libraries, the number of new customer registrations experiences a slight month-to-month and year-to-year gain. So, despite the leaking bucket of customers, the number of new customers seems to make the bucket slightly fuller. Second, a majority of libraries do not have excess staff and so feel that they are straining to meet the existing demand for services. How would such libraries cope with the need to serve new customers as well as serving the existing customers if fewer customers left? And third, many libraries—perhaps a majority—can point to customer satisfaction surveys that suggest that more than 90 percent of customers are satisfied or extremely satisfied with the public library.

The goal for most public libraries is to meet the needs and expectations of their customers. A fundamental question to ask is “who determines whether those needs and expectations have been met?” For many libraries, the library management team makes the assessment. But if the library is concerned about the customer, then asking the customer to rate the library makes more sense. This explains the need for customer satisfaction surveys.

Most public libraries will analyze various segments of their service population during a strategic planning process. Few libraries, however, routinely segment and analyze their service population, on an annual basis, using three broad categories: customers, lost customers, and non-customers. It is also important to segment library customers into frequent, moderate, and low users. Research has shown that about 80 percent of a library’s circulation is typically accounted for by about 20 percent of the library’s customers. This is often called the Pareto distribution or the 80/20 rule.\(^1\)

Lost customers are those individuals who come to the library, register for a library card, and then never return after one or two visits to the library. Surprisingly, few libraries do anything to identify the reasons why the customers become lost along the road to becoming regular library users. A library might use a series of
focus groups in order to better understand why customers become lost. In addition, given that most library customers have provided an e-mail address during the customer registration process, periodic marketing messages could be delivered to those who have not used the library in the last six months. The reasons for customers becoming lost are likely to vary depending on the socioeconomic characteristics of the community.

Satisfaction Surveys
Many libraries use satisfaction surveys to learn whether or not their customers are happy with their products and services. And typically, these surveys yield very positive results. Yet, as many different segments of the economy have discovered, what matters is not what customers say about their level of satisfaction, but whether the value they feel they have received will keep them coming back.

As tools for measuring the value an organization delivers to its customers, satisfaction surveys are imperfect. There are three principal problems with relying on overall satisfaction results of surveys. First, these surveys have become an end in themselves in many communities. This is illustrated when a library director receives a telephone call from the mayor who wants to know why the customer satisfaction rating for the library dropped from 94 to 91 percent. And yet the experiences in the commercial sector demonstrate that good customer satisfaction scores, or receiving the Baldrige Award for quality, is no guarantee for improved economic performance. Some organizations that have seen their customer satisfaction ratings improve have also experienced declining sales and profitability. Thus overall satisfaction ratings are not sufficient.

Second, most library satisfaction surveys are skewed—that is, the majority of survey respondents report high levels of satisfaction. Due to the “apple pie effect” (libraries are grouped with motherhood and apple pie), survey respondents feel that they need to report high ratings regardless of their experiences. Thus overall satisfaction ratings for libraries are almost always higher than for other service-based organizations.

The third problem has to do with the way satisfaction surveys are designed and carried out. While some libraries will hire a firm to complete a random telephone survey of their community, most libraries rely on a convenience sample—asking those who visit the library physically or virtually to complete a survey. The problems associated with a convenience sample are that too often lost customers and non-customers are not asked their views and the sample size is typically quite small. Most satisfaction surveys do not identify the critical distinctions among various customer segments. Additional problems revolve around the way questions are worded, the length of the survey (most are too long), and whether the respondent has the opportunity to offer comments. And finally, most managers do not have any idea of how to translate the results of a survey into an action plan for service improvements for the library.

An Alternative Approach
The Conference Board of Canada prepared a report suggesting that the loyalty of customers would fall into three zones (zone of loyalty, zone of indifference, and zone of defection). Customers that ranked a product or service provided by an organization in the zone of loyalty were more likely to remain customers than those in the other zones.²

Frederick Reichheld embarked on a research project to determine which customer satisfaction questions would predict customer loyalty and future purchases of goods or services. This research has spanned several years and involved a number of industries, arriving at a surprising conclusion—you need to know what your customers tell their friends about you. The research linked survey responses to the actual purchases made in the following years.³

It turns out a single question was most effective in terms of predicting future spending across industries: “How likely is it that you would recommend [company X] to a friend or colleague?”

Notice that the question is not about customer satisfaction or loyalty. Rather, it’s about the customer’s willingness to recommend a product or service to someone else. Respondents use a ten-point scale where ten means “extremely likely” to recommend, five means neutral, and zero means “not at all likely.” Respondents from a statistically valid sample are then grouped into three logical clusters:

- **Promoters** are loyal enthusiasts who give ratings of nine or ten.
- **Passive** are satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who provide ratings of seven or eight.
- **Detractors** are unhappy customers who give ratings from zero to six.

A Net Promoter Score (NPS) is then calculated by taking the percentage of customers who are promoters and subtracting the percentage who are detrac-
tors. Some of the most successful companies, such as Amazon.com, eBay, Dell, Costco, USAA, Intuit, FedEx, Harley-Davidson, Vanguard, and Enterprise Rent-a-Car have NPS ratings that range from 50 to 80 percent. However, the average firm sputters along with scores of only 5 to 10 percent. And some organizations have NPS ratings that are negative.4

Most organizations have a plethora of performance measures that track operations, sales, and profitability. The more measures they have, the less relevant each measure becomes. Given a wide range of measures, the question then becomes: which one or what set of measures should be focused on? The value of the NPS rating is that it gives the organization a single measure to focus on.

Library NPS
The obvious question then arises: “What would an NPS be for public libraries?” Using data from Counting Opinions, a firm that specializes in library data management solutions (including a customer satisfaction feedback management system), an NPS was calculated for a number of libraries as shown in table 1. It is important to recognize that the data come from a convenience sample and not a random sample. That is, those that responded to the Web-based survey chose to do so. It stands to reason that those who might be unhappy with the library and its services are less likely to take the time to complete a survey. Note that the identity of each library is not revealed, as the intent is not to praise or embarrass any library but rather to explore the potential utility of a library NPS rating. The question asked of the survey respondents, using a ten-point scale, was “Would you recommend the services of this library to others?”

Among the fifty-three public libraries for which data was available in October 2008, the average library NPS rating is 70.9 percent. The NPS ratings ranged from a high of 73.2 percent to a low of 37.8 percent for U.S. public libraries and a high of 58.1 percent to a low of 21.3 percent for Canadian public libraries. Note that the number of detractors ranged from 4.7 percent to 29.3 percent with an average of slightly more than 17.6 percent. In general, the number of survey respondents for each library averaged 1,700-plus.

The data can be further analyzed by examining the responses from 277 branches—data not included. While the average NPS score is 74.3 percent, the range is much wider—from a high of 96.8 percent to a low of negative 12.5 percent. Thus, examining data at the branch level may provide insights into branches where serious problems may be found.

Promoters are very frequent library users, are adults, and ascribe a high value to the library. Detractors are typically first-time library users, are not likely to return, have multiple library cards (and thus compare collections and services that they receive), and are likely to be students.

Conclusion
The importance of providing high-quality services to public library customers cannot be overemphasized. One of the most important feedback mechanisms available to the library is the use of a customer satisfaction survey. In addition to examining the total favorable scores, another perspective about how well a library is doing is to calculate the NPS for the library. If the number of detractors is more than 10 percent, then the library should use additional means of gathering customer feedback (e.g., use focus groups) to discover some of the reasons for the high level of detractors.

Calculating the library NPS rating provides another perspective that is fairly sobering—although not as discouraging as the average rating for commercial firms. The NPS ratings suggest that there is certainly room for improving the customer satisfaction rating of public library customers.

References
### Table 1. Public Library Net Promoter Scores (NPS)

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The Lubuto Library Project and the Universality of Public Library Services for Youth

DENISE E. AGOSTO is an Associate Professor in the College of Information Science and Technology at Drexel University in Philadelphia; denise.agosto@ischool.drexel.edu. Denise is reading My One Hundred Adventures by Polly Horvath.

The Lubuto Library Project provides library services to street kids, orphans, and other vulnerable children and adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, many of whom have been orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Although the first Lubuto library opened in the fall of 2007, the seeds of Lubuto were planted in the late 1990s when Lubuto founder and president Jane Meyers was living in Lusaka, Zambia. After unexpectedly receiving a shipment of books that had been weeded from UK school libraries, Meyers used a large shipping container to create a makeshift library at the Fountain of Hope drop-in center for street children in central Lusaka.

According to the World Bank, the 2006 per-capita gross national income of Zambia was $630. The U.S. per-capita gross national income was $44,970, or more than 71 times higher. This means that there is not enough money to provide library and educational services to Zambia that are comparable to those of the United States. Prior to the creation of the makeshift library, youth at the Fountain of Hope shelter had no access to library services.

Meyers soon saw dramatic social and educational benefits among the street kids who used the makeshift library. This inspired a plan to build full-service public libraries for street kids, orphans, and other vulnerable youth. Work toward founding Lubuto began in earnest in 2003. The organization became incorporated in January 2005, and it became an officially registered nonprofit in Zambia later that year, with an inaugural fundraising event in November 2005. Lubuto means “enlightenment, knowledge, and light” in the language spoken by the Bemba people of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and it reflects Lubuto’s overriding goal of promoting education and self-improvement for vulnerable African youth.

Construction on the first Lubuto library began in July 2006. The grand opening celebration took place on September 21, 2007. It featured the first president of Zambia, Kenneth David Kaunda, reading the book Caps for Sale as the Barefeet Theatre drama and acrobatic troupe, comprised of local street kids, acted out the...
story. President Kaunda also gave a keynote address, during which he stressed the importance of literacy to Zambia’s future success.

Designed by architect Eleni Coromvli, a resident of Zambia, each Lubuto library is a three-building complex featuring traditional thatched roofs, an entrance structure with a sink, a sunken African “talking circle” for read-alouds and traditional storytelling events, collection space, and an arts and activities center. Local youth take part in building construction, learning useful construction skills, and fostering community ownership of the libraries.

There are a number of other programs that provide books to African schools, but they do not reach the most severely disadvantaged youth. Lubuto is creating a whole new type of institution to reach school-aged children who cannot attend school. Lubuto libraries are much more than just book provision services. They are fully featured community libraries with a complete range of library programs and services.

Meyers plans to build at least one hundred Lubuto libraries across Africa over the coming decades. Each library will be run by staff who will be trained to “oversee the library collection, provide library programs and services, identify and purchase local language materials, and collect quantitative and qualitative data about library use and impact.” Recognizing the educational benefits for children not adequately served by the Zambia educational system, the Zambian government has requested that Lubuto build libraries in regional education zones throughout the country. These locations will help to advance Lubuto’s goals. As Meyers explains, “A critical factor in the project’s success is accessibility to vulnerable children, especially street children. Libraries must be located within walking distance” of where these youth live. Expansion plans are contingent on fundraising, partnerships with other organizations, and support from aid agencies and companies such as Brodart Co. (www.brodart.com). As a Lubuto partner, Brodart provides label protectors and other supplies for the collections.

Although much of the funding for Lubuto comes from the United States and other developed nations, Lubuto libraries are African organizations, designed, staffed, and frequented mainly by members of the African communities in which they are situated. This article will compare the roles that Lubuto libraries play in African youths’ lives to the roles that public libraries play in African youths’ lives to test the idea that the core roles of libraries are largely universal, surpassing both cultural and contextual boundaries. The comparison will be based on analysis of two semi-structured interviews with Meyers and on analysis of the Lubuto website and selected organizational documents, including press releases, speech transcripts, and newsletters.
Public Libraries and U.S. Youth

What roles do libraries play in the lives of youth in the United States? Information provision is obviously one important role, but is it the only significant role? This author surveyed U.S. teen public library users about the reasons why they use libraries. I found many more reasons than just information seeking. Based on the study findings, I developed a model of adolescent public library use. The model includes three main roles of libraries in U.S. teens’ lives: (1) the library as information gateway, (2) the library as social interaction/entertainment space, and (3) the library as beneficial physical environment.

A close look at Lubuto library services and programs shows that Lubuto libraries play all three of these roles for vulnerable African children and teens, and that these three roles are embedded in Lubuto’s organizational goals. For impoverished and otherwise vulnerable children and adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, Lubuto seeks to “improve literacy, expand English-language skills, increase general knowledge, promote the enjoyment of books and learning, and provide a safe haven and connection with adults who care.”

Lubuto Libraries as Information Gateways

The library as information gateway refers to the library as provider of information and information access, from book circulation, to Internet and database access, to reference services, and so on. Teens that use libraries in this capacity search for information for personal, school, and other needs.

Lubuto libraries are first and foremost information gateways. A main goal of Lubuto is to provide educational services to disadvantaged youth who cannot attend regular schools.

Lubuto library users learn general literacy skills and knowledge of a wide variety of topics. A number of users of the precursor library at the Fountain of Hope drop-in shelter have gone on to pass secondary-school entrance exams and to win scholarships to enter formal education systems. The library materials are primarily in English, Zambia’s official language, so youth who speak languages other than English at home also gain increased English proficiency. This is particularly important for success in the Zambian workforce.

At this point, Lubuto collections are limited to books. While the target population is also badly in need of computer resources, Meyers points out that books and basic literacy are the first need, and that youth must acquire basic literacy skills before they can use computers. Similarly, Sisulu has suggested that:

Without a high standard of literacy, it won’t matter how many computers sit in our [African] schools. A culture of reading and literacy is inextricably intertwined with the availability of books, yet the majority of children in Africa have little access to reading materials. Too many of our schools do not even have libraries, to say nothing of computers.

Nonetheless, there are future plans for stocking the libraries with XO laptops through the One Laptop per Child Program, which provides disadvantaged children in developing countries with inexpensive learning laptops. (Visit http://laptop.org/en/index.shtml for more information.)

Each Lubuto collection starts with four thousand donated volumes selected by Lubuto staff. Selection criteria include relevance and collection balance. U.S. and UK publishers, librarians, teachers, and the general public comprise the bulk of book donors. Lubuto also helps to organize book drives in U.S. schools and community organizations, and the staff acquires additional local materials for the collections. U.S. and Zambian volunteers help with materials selection, technical processing, cataloging, and preparation for shipment to Africa. Within the collections, books are organized with a home-grown classification system designed with Lubuto users’ unique needs in mind.

The collections contain both nonfiction and fiction materials. Reading for pleasure is promoted both for its educational and emotional benefits, and Lubuto staff and volunteers help their young users to learn to treasure books and learning.

Lubuto Libraries as Social Interaction and Entertainment Spaces

The library as social interaction/entertainment space involves using libraries to create and maintain social relationships, or simply as a source for pleasure. U.S. teens who use public libraries for this purpose attend organized library entertainment events, use libraries as places to meet with friends, and visit libraries in order to interact with librarians and other library staff.

Lubuto libraries play this role for disadvantaged African youth, benefiting the entire community by serving as community social and entertainment spaces. The target population is children and teens, but the broader community is welcomed into the

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**Lubuto Libraries**

Lubuto Libraries is a project of the Zimbabwean-based Lifespan Development Foundation (LDF). The project was established to provide educational services to children and teens who cannot attend regular schools and who do not have access to libraries. The project is named after the Lubuto Library Project, a precursor library at the Fountain of Hope drop-in shelter in Lusaka, Zambia. The project is supported by a range of organizations and individuals, including the U.S. government and the Zambian government.

**Contact Information**

Zimbabwe Lifespan Development Foundation

95 Blackburn

Lusaka, Zambia

Telephone: +260 126 133 917

Email: info@lifespandevelopmentfoundation.org

Website: http://lifespandevelopmentfoundation.org

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**Lubuto Library Project**

The Lubuto Library Project is a precursor library at the Fountain of Hope drop-in shelter in Lusaka, Zambia. The library was established to provide educational services to children and teens who cannot attend regular schools and who do not have access to libraries. The library is named after the Lubuto Library Project, a project of the Zimbabwean-based Lifespan Development Foundation (LDF). The library is supported by a range of organizations and individuals, including the U.S. government and the Zambian government.

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Email: info@lifespandevelopmentfoundation.org

Website: http://lifespandevelopmentfoundation.org
Reading for pleasure is promoted both for its educational and emotional benefits, and Lubuto staff and volunteers help their young users to learn to treasure books and learning.

Lubuto Libraries as Beneficial Physical Environments

The library as beneficial physical environment refers to youth seeking libraries as positive atmospheres, as opposed to using libraries to seek information, social interaction, or entertainment. Types of use falling under this category for U.S. teens include seeking physical refuge, volunteering in libraries as a form of community service, and working at libraries as a form of financial support.22

Lubuto libraries also play this third role in the lives of impoverished and otherwise disadvantaged African youth. Lubuto's organizational goals specify that its libraries "provide a safe haven" for vulnerable children and teens.23 This is especially important for the countless African youth who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The World Health Organization's statistics show that each year, 840 of every 100,000 Zambian citizens die of AIDS.24 In the United States, just five out of every 100,000 citizens die of AIDS each year, making the Zambian AIDS death rate a stunning 168 times higher than that of the United States. As a result of this high rate of deaths due to HIV/AIDS, many Zambian youth have been left homeless in recent years. Lubuto libraries provide a secure environment where homeless children and teens can keep off of the streets during the day:

Lubuto Libraries don't give street kids all that they need. But they are special places, out of the elements and safe. The Lubuto Library Project partners with shelters, drop-in centers, and other community centers serving children in need.25

Lubuto libraries also serve as places for community members to volunteer their time as community service. U.S. and Zambian adults and youth of all ages perform a number of volunteer roles within the organization, helping to improve the broader Lubuto communities and helping volunteers to feel pride in their community contributions. Moreover, Lubuto libraries will also serve as a source for financial support for their staffs, with plans to develop a cadre of Lubuto librarians under discussion with Zambia's Ministry of Education.
Conclusion

Based on this analysis of Lubuto, it seems that the concept and function of public libraries are largely universal, providing information access, social and entertainment spaces, and beneficial physical environments. Just as U.S. public libraries are much more than just information providers, Lubuto libraries are much more than just book providers. They provide educational opportunities for vulnerable youth, and serve as community centers for the wider local population. They also provide a means for artistic expression and other forms of self-expression for severely disadvantaged youth.

Author’s note: Librarians and others wishing to help the Lubuto Library Project can visit the Lubuto website (www.Lubuto.org) to find out how to donate time, supplies, or funds. Books, bookends, and book trucks are especially needed. Lubuto is also looking for schools, libraries, and Friends groups to organize book and funding drives, and for volunteer groups to process, classify, and prepare books to be sent to Africa. To date, U.S. high school students have collected more than 6,500 books for Lubuto libraries through student-run book drives. Librarians and teachers interested in involving their students can request a copy of Kids Just like You, a ten-minute informational film aimed at middle school and high school students. Book donation guidelines and other handout materials are also available. Visit www.Lubuto.org for more information.

References

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
17. ———, 2008.
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READERS’ ADVISORY

2.0

RECOMMENDING FANFICTION

KIMBERLY GRIFFIS is a Circulation Specialist at the Olin Library at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida; kgriffis@rollins.edu. Kimberly is reading Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew by Bart D. Ehrman and War As They Knew It: Woody Hayes, Bo Schembechler, and America in a Time of Unrest by Michael Rosenberg.

D. YVONNE JONES is a Science Librarian at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia; jonesdy@jmu.edu. She is reading The Sparrow by Mary Doria Russell and Why Science? by James Trefil.

Can Harry Potter really be over? The Harry Potter phenomenon led to worldwide sales of more than 400 million copies of that seven-book series.1 But what now? What of the absorption of readers with their favorite characters and plots in film and television, as well as books? How do we embrace our readers “where they are” and “who they are” and offer opportunities for them to continue with their story interests? What can we bring to a readers’ advisory (RA) for the new online era?

RA is changing, along with everything else in the library world, trying to keep pace with new technologies and new approaches to linking materials and discovering new reading interests. The transformation of social interactive technology that exemplifies Web 2.0 is creating a Library 2.0 environment. Laura Cohen’s publication of “A Librarian’s 2.0 Manifesto” and the mashup of it by Ontario, Canada’s Pickering Public Library (www.myplus.ca/manifestofinal.html) clearly visualize a new path. A logical further extension is to fully embrace not just Web technology, but Web content, by moving to RA 2.0 and including online fanfiction as part of our collection of reading resources.

Fanfiction, or fanfic, is fiction written by fans of an original work, using the original story’s characters and settings. Clearly, by this definition, it has been around for quite some time. Wikipedia, in a useful overview article, refers to “unauthorized published sequels to such works as Don Quixote” as early as the 1600s.2 Modern fanfic derives from printed fanzines published in the 1960s based on the Star Trek television series. With improvements in computing technology, the online world of fanfic was born in the 1970s and has expanded immeasurably ever since.

A key point to remember is that fanfiction is more than a collection of online reading. It is truly a part of the 2.0 experience, encouraging participatory involvement by supporting and encouraging writing as well as reading. Many fanfic sites provide editorial assistance for writers who request it, using volunteer editors called
beta-readers. In addition to encouraging the creation of new fanfic, the online sites provide easy venues for reviews. Much like the personal reviews available at places such as Amazon.com, fanfic sites provide often extensive reviews of the stories posted. For example, the following statement from www.harrypotterfanfiction.com shows the importance of reviews to the overall environment of these sites: “If you read any of the stories here, please remember to leave a review. Authors thrive on feedback and your reviews help them to improve as writers. Thank you for taking the time to stop by.”

Between beta-readers and reviewers, these easily accessible 2.0 communication tools make fanfic sites a wonderful forum for writers of all ages to develop their skills. Several authors have pointed out the value of fanfic sites in providing an accepting community for teenage readers and writers. The benefit of this online community does not stop at a particular age, however. A recent article in Writer’s Digest highlighted the contribution of the fanfic community to the success of three adult authors in moving to commercial publication of their work.

As fanfic is not restricted to one age group, it also is not restricted to a narrow range of interests, focused only on science fiction or fantasy as many might suppose, given its roots. Rather, it encompasses characters and settings from TV, films, cartoons, games, and (not to be forgotten) actual books. For example, there are numerous websites devoted solely to the books of Jane Austen (www.austen.com, www.pemberley.com, www.bennetgirls.com) or J. R. R. Tolkien (www.lotrfanfiction.com, www.storiesofarda.com). There are even websites hosting fanfic about real people: the Princess Diana Memorial Fiction Library (www.mmmjp.or.jp/amlang.atc/fiction) or the Beatles Fan Fiction Directory (www.angelfire.com/ band2/beatlesfanfiction). Most large fanfic sites don't include real-people stories, however, due to libel and privacy concerns. (For more detailed fanfic site information, see the appendix on page 64.)

As librarians, one obvious concern about fanfic is the issue of copyright. This is indeed an area where fanfic writers need to be careful. Most sites require the posting of a standard disclaimer for every story, but still there can be concerns. The Stanford Center for Internet and Society maintains a fanfic topic page (www.chillingeffects.org/fanfic) to help inform writers of the legal issues. Most of the time, when challenged, fanfic is considered as “fair use,” an amateur production with no profit involved and not intended to infringe on the original creator’s rights. However, copyright continues to be a concern, and some authors actively discourage fanfic. Anne Rice has posted the following message on her website regarding fanfic:

“I do not allow fan fiction. The characters are copyrighted. It upsets me terribly to even think about fan fiction with my characters. I advise my readers to write your own original stories with your own characters. It is absolutely essential that you respect my wishes.”

While some mainstream authors expressly discourage fanfic, others accept it as a tribute to their ability to create meaningful characters. An agent for J. K. Rowling expressed her reaction:

“She is very flattered by the fact there is such great interest in her Harry Potter series and that people take the time to write their own stories. . . . Her concern would be to make sure that it remains a noncommercial activity to ensure fans are not exploited and it is not being published in the strict sense of traditional print publishing.

Who better than a librarian to serve as a guide to the best resources? Isn’t that what RA is all about? Librarians can recommend online fiction that is appropriate to the particular age and interests of a reader and can help readers avoid material that is too mature by identifying the ratings that accompany posted stories or directing readers to fanfic sites devoted to selected age groups or plot topics. RA 2.0 can provide useful recommendations that are accepting of this powerful online fiction community.

In the recent book Reading Matters (a compilation of essays on reading, libraries, and community), the chapter on “Young Adults and Reading” highlights “What Librarians and Parents Can Do” with four recommendations. Each of these recommendations is supported by fanfic: (1) “Continue to provide access to materials that reflect up-to-the-minute cultural interests of young people,” (2) “Create and distribute pathfinders that include Web resources and Web venues for youth writing,” (3) “offer workshops on creative writing and support venues for publication,” and (4) “Provide access to ‘real live’ writers who might inspire young people to write.” With RA 2.0, librarians can act on these recommendations and be the needed guide to provide readers of all ages with ways to truly enjoy online fiction.

References

**Appendix: Selected Fanfic Sites**

**General Fanfic Sites with Multiple Fandoms**

**www.fanfiction.net**

This is probably the biggest single repository of fanfic on the Web. If you can’t find it here, people just aren’t writing about it. The largest fandom on this site is based on the world of Harry Potter, with more than 377,000 fanfics posted at the time of this writing. The fandoms are divided into categories that you can browse: anime/manga, books, cartoons, comics, games, miscellaneous, movies, and TV shows. After selecting a particular fandom, a list of all postings is given in order of the most recently updated. The reader can sort stories by genre (twenty-one possibilities: from adventure, angst, or crime, to suspense, tragedy, or western), ratings (K to T is the default, suitable for all ages up to teens. M-rated stories are also available, recommended only for readers older than sixteen years of age. MA stories, mature-adult rating with explicit themes, are not posted on this site.), languages (more than thirty-two languages represented), length of story, particular characters present in the story, and story status (in progress or completed, serialization of stories is very common in fanfic). Each story links to any reviews posted about it. With its huge archive of stories, age-appropriate rating indicators, and many choices of content and language, www.fanfiction.net is a great site to start exploring fanfic.

**www.fictionpress.com**

This is a sister site to www.fanfiction.net that hosts original works with original characters. The stories are sorted by genre and there is a great deal of poetry here also. The ratings are the same as www.fanfiction.net and the layout is also very similar.

**www.fanlib.com**

This site also offers many different fandoms, but uses a much more colorful and image-rich environment. Many authors use images from the television shows or movies they are writing about. It can be a bit jarring in comparison with the other sites that are heavily text-based, but definitely appeals to its own group. If you click on “browse” at the top of the screen, and then “fandoms,” the next page you see shows you the most popular seventy-five fandoms of the day and how many stories are in each fandom. There is an “all” rating, which is suitable for everybody, and a 13+ rating, equivalent to a PG-13 movie.

**Harry Potter Fanfic**

**www.fictionalley.org**

This site has anything and everything about Harry Potter—fanfic, book discussions, information for newbies, a writer’s corner, a reader’s corner, lots of fan art, even a Harry Potter wiki. It is one of the largest archives of Harry Potter fanfic, designed for teens older than the age of 13 and adults, but with no “adults only” material. You can search the fanfic archive by date, relationship, character, era, and genre, or select “random story,” which does exactly what you think. FictionAlley is divided into four houses: Schnoogle hosts novel-length stories (at least sixty pages long) from all genres; TheDarkArts concentrates on mysteries, dramas, “angsty” stories and anything serious; AstronomyTower features romance stories of all lengths; and Riddikulus is the place for funny tales.

**www.harrypotterfanfiction.com**

Here’s another site mainly for teens and adults who like to read good Harry Potter stories without a lot of adult themes. You will not find stories with NC-17 adult content. There are also warnings on each story regarding language, violence, sexual content, and any spoilers for readers who may not have read or viewed the entire canon. On the left side of the screen you will see links to member login, how many stories are online, who’s online, the types of stories found on the
site, listings of pairings, and story formats. There is also a list of featured stories that the moderators recommend based on quality and story type. You do not have to register to read the stories, but if you wish to publish your original fanfic you need to create an account.

http://hpficforkids.magnoliamama.com
This is the Harry Potter site for young children. The introduction to the site says "Welcome to The Wizard's Playground! This archive is for young witches, wizards, Muggles, and Squibs between the ages of 6 and 12 who are interested in reading stories about Harry Potter and his friends at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry written by fans of the Harry Potter books." This is not a very large site and is infrequently updated. However, the stories appear of high quality and are appropriate for the targeted age range.

Crossover Fanfic
www.tthfanfic.com
This site hosts fanfic crossovers (combining characters from different original sources), primarily those crossing Buffy, The Vampire Slayer with other fandoms. There are Buffy/Highlander crosses, Buffy/ Harry Potter crosses and Buffy/ Marvel crosses and these are just the tip of the iceberg. This site has stories for every age range. In the top right-hand corner of the screen are the "ratings" with FR7, FR13, FR15, FR18, and FR21 (FR stands for Fan Rating). If you create an account, you are able to track stories that you are reading and get e-mails when favorite stories are updated. The FAQ link provides general information about the site and what all the icons mean.

Jane Austen Fanfic
On these sites, the writers are true to Jane Austen's literary style, making them appropriate for most ages, with no concerns about adult content.

www.austen.com
This site hosts information about Jane Austen and her various writings, fiction, and letters she wrote to friends and family. There are links to her works online, to various clubs, and to the Derbyshire Writer's Guild. This is where the fanfic is located. It is divided into two different sections—Epilogue Abbey and Fantasia Gallery. Epilogue Abbey contains the fanfic that is true to the time period and Jane Austen's style. Fantasia Gallery contains everything else—stories placed in different time periods and stories with more fanciful elements or anything else not truthful to the Regency era in which her stories were set.

www.pemberley.com
Here you can find discussion groups for all the Jane Austen books and various adaptations of the books. Under the heading, "Slightly Off the Austen Track," the link to "Bits of Ivory" contains the fanfic and various discussions of Austen and non-Austen works.

www.bennetgirls.com
This site contains fanfic and original writings. Some of the stories are set in modern times and others are set in the original time period. You can access the fanfic in two ways—either click on the author's name on the cube that spins or select the picture of Jane Austen that says Jane Austen fanfic. There are also forums, chats, and a fanfic role-playing game that you can join.

J.R.R. Tolkien Fanfic
www.lotrfanfiction.com
On this site you will find Lord of the Rings (LOTR) fanfic directed toward both the books and the movies. It also includes real person stories starring actors from the LOTR movies, fanfics about characters played by LOTR actors in other movies, various other fandoms, and original works. The filter settings have to be manually set, but there are stories rated G to NC-17.

www.storiesofarda.com
This is another site with thousands of stories about LOTR, although much more restricted in content. All posted stories are "set in the universe of J. R. R. Tolkien, with respect for his original work." Only stories considered rated G–R are allowed and no slash fiction (stories with same-sex relationships) is accepted. The homepage has the most recently updated stories on it. If you want to search based on a certain rating or if the story is complete or you only want to read stories that have Legolas as a character, it is very easy to do. Click on the search icon at the top of the page and it gives you a search screen where you can select all of the criteria that are important to you and find stories that fit your needs. There is a link where you can join the site so you can publish stories or just to keep track of your favorite authors and stories.
If you are interested in reviewing or submitting materials for “By the Book,” contact the contributing editor, JULIE ELLIOTT, Assistant Librarian, Reference/Coordinator of Public Relations and Outreach, Indiana University South Bend, 1700 Mishawaka Ave., P.O. Box 7111, South Bend, IN 46634-7111; jmfelli@iusb.edu.

Julie is reading The Turnaround by George Pelecanos.

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

100 Great American Novels You've (Probably) Never Read


“Some of the greatest novels ever written never receive the acclaim, accolades, and recognition they deserve—in fact, it’s likely you’ve never even heard of them. Whether it’s because of lack of marketing, the wrong publisher, or one of the many other possible reasons, there are hundreds of literary masterpieces sitting on library shelves gathering dust” (ix).

100 Great American Novels You've (Probably) Never Read aims to rectify this situation by presenting an array of American literature that has been overlooked. Karl Bridges offers an introduction to lesser known works by recognized American authors such as Horatio Alger, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Thornton Wilder. He also presents works by authors who are unknown and forgotten.

The selection is limited to American authors, either by birth or by settling in the United States. The majority of works are from the twentieth century, with only four novels published before 1900. The earliest work included, Edgar Huntly, or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker by Charles Brockden Brown, is from 1797. Approximately a quarter of the novels are written by women. Bridges confined his selection to titles that can be found with little effort, though they may not be readily available on every library shelf.

This work was designed to be a resource for librarians and general readers who are looking for something new. Each entry is two to three pages long and includes the publication information for the edition Bridges read, the original publication date of the work, a genre heading, a quote from the book, a brief synopsis of the story, a critical commentary, an author sketch, a list of other works by the author, and suggestions for further reading.

This book accomplishes what it set out to do. It gives a refreshing look at American literature. Bridges covers diverse genres, including literary fiction, historical fiction, sci-fi, young adult, Native American, feminist, Hispanic, and others. This book is a valuable resource for librarians looking for new titles for their collections or book discussion groups. It is especially fun for those folks who think they’ve read everything!—Michelle Powers, Online Librarian, American Intercontinental University
Is Consulting for You? A Primer for Information Professionals


Many information professionals are attracted to the idea of consulting at some point in their careers. This clear and concise guide provides an excellent overview.

Author Ulla de Stricker is a well-known information specialist, consultant, and business owner. Who better to get advice from about starting a consulting business?

The book is divided into two parts. Part one is for those who are considering consulting. It outlines various types of consulting jobs, offers key questions to ask yourself, and gives the familiar pro/con list. The author defines the differences between consulting and freelancing, and gives a very detailed picture of both the innate characteristics one should have before embarking on a consulting profession such as patience, comfort working alone, time management skills, and vision; and the learnable skills necessary to succeed, such as communication, negotiation, business management, and planning skills.

Part two is for those who have already decided to embark on a consulting career. It covers business planning and marketing, legal status, taxes, figuring out a business name, creating a website, and writing proposals and contracts. The author gives a great step-by-step outline for going through the contract process with a potential client, and sound advice on practical but possibly overlooked questions such as: How often do you stay in touch with the client through the project?

Readers may be disappointed that there aren't more examples from the trenches. The statistics offered on the job outlook are outdated, giving estimates of changes in the workforce of librarianship “during the period 1998-2008” (17).

However, it is an excellent introductory book for any librarian interested in consulting.—Michelle Powers, Online Librarian, American Intercontinental University

Poetry People: A Practical Guide to Children's Poets


A bounty of information about contemporary children's poetry is presented in an accessible and practical format. Sixty-two poets are profiled in concise two-to-three-page entries that include biographical information, author websites, book lists, descriptive commentary, and programming suggestions. Well known poets such as Douglas Florian, Nikki Grimes, Paul Janeczko, and Jack Prelutsky are presented alongside lesser known or more recent arrivals to poetry—Calef Brown, Deborah Chandra, and Monica Gunning. Vardell's depth of poetic knowledge is obvious in her discussion of each poet's body of work. Each entry explains the varied forms (e.g., concrete and shape poetry, haiku), subject matter (family, sports, school), and styles (humorous, serious) of these poets. Suggestions for read-alike pairings and programming ideas extend the possibilities for sharing these poems and poetry with children.

Following these profiles are several additional resources: a list of poets to watch (including Adam Rex), children's authors who also write poetry, verse novelists, anthologists, classic poets (think Robert Frost), and poets who write for adults and children. Other resources include a list of awards for poetry for young people with past winners, a calendar of poet's birthdays, promotional activities, and a list of biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs about poets round out this section. Poetry People is a valuable and recommended resource for librarians wishing to promote poetry in school and public libraries.—Ernie Cox, Librarian, St. Timothy's School, Raleigh, North Carolina

Caribbean Libraries in the 21st Century: Changes, Challenges, and Choices


In an area of the world known more by Americans for its sun-drenched beaches, resplendent blue sea, and multihued cocktails, there is a tradition of librarianship very similar and at the same time quite distinct from the profession as practiced in the United States. For public librarians and library students interested in international library practices and development, Caribbean Libraries in the 21st Century is a tome worth reading.

The work traces the history of Caribbean librarianship and then discusses the modern-day trends, advances, and concerns affecting libraries in this multicultural and multilingual part of the world. The geographic definition for the Caribbean employed by the compendium is that used by the
Association of Caribbean University, Research, and Institutional Libraries (ACURIL). As such, the Caribbean region comprises countries in the eponymous archipelago, and those mainland countries and U.S. states that border the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico.

There are twenty-five chapters divided among eight broader sections, the first being a historical overview of Caribbean libraries, followed by sections on modern management practices of collections, personnel and services, pioneering services, effects and implementation of information technology, interlibrary cooperation, user instruction, distance education, and Caribbean librarians and their issues and functions. Various types of libraries are covered, namely academic, but also school, special, and public in urban and rural settings. The chapters are written primarily by professional librarians who currently work in the Caribbean or have extensive experience with the region. Each chapter is preceded by an abstract and contains a list of works cited. The content ranges in type from case studies to survey analysis to commentary.

Caribbean Libraries puts these libraries into context with the greater modern sociopolitical realities and technological developments of the 21st century, covering topics such as the controversy over rare Caribbean materials being owned outside of the region, digitization of local ephemera, and cooperation with a Caribbean nation’s “mother” country for librarian training. Public librarians may be particularly interested in the articles on Internet access policies in Jamaican public libraries, and Trinidad and Tobago’s award-winning library services programs to the blind.—Rebecca Kennedy, Adult Services Librarian, Chicago Public Library

Government Documents Librarianship: A Guide to the Neo-Depository Era


Government Documents Librarianship: A Guide to the Neo-Depository Era grew from Lisa A. Ennis’s experience in successfully bringing a depository library out from probationary status within the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). Although her documents experience was limited, she volunteered to coordinate the collection, and within the year had turned it around, earning it a compliant rating.

In the introduction, Ennis states that the book is intended to be a useful guide to managing documents within a depository library, as opposed to step-by-step instructions. It is not about how to use documents. Whether intended or not, I believe the author has written something of an introductory textbook,
or supplemental text in any case, for government documents librarianship as well as a down-to-earth introduction to this subject for anyone interested. I would recommend this as a reference book for public libraries given that with the proliferation of online information available from the federal government (in the form of websites, data, and publications), any library can be in varying degrees, a selective depository. Public libraries link to government agencies and publications through their webpages; now they can also download MARC records for electronic publications to their own catalogs. Government Documents Librarianship could serve as a handy and informative publication, providing background information and offering a look at what your library can provide for your patrons.

It contains eight chapters that move from a general introduction to the field, a history of and current look at the Government Printing Office (GPO) and the FDLP, the training and peer support that is available, and, briefly, the many requirements and issues of managing a documents collection. A bibliography as well as additional readings and resources are included. The book is indexed. About one-third of the book is made up of four appendixes, three of which (the Biennial Survey questions of 2005, an example of Administrative Notes Technical Supplement, and the revised 1999 Self Study of a Depository Library) are lengthy reproductions of material that is freely available online. At first, this seemed to me like an unnecessary inclusion, but having these in hand serves to link them to the author’s content. I found myself flipping back and forth between them. There are certainly plenty of other references to online resources referred to in the book, and one could easily lose interest if you had to jump back and forth between them all. The Self Study is to be updated, but this version still serves as a means to check the health of your documents collection.

To sum up, I found Government Documents Librarianship a highly readable book full of honest, first-hand advice and the expression of a job well done.—Bruce Sarjeant, Reference/Documents and Maps Librarian, Northern Michigan University, Marquette

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**Combine Historical Research and Social Networking with Footnote.com**

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Footnote.com is a place where original historical documents are combined with social networking in order to create a unique experience involving the stories of our past.

The Footnote.com collections feature documents, most never before available on the Internet, relating to the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I and II, U.S. presidents, historical newspapers, naturalization documents, and more.

For instance, Footnote.com developed a new partnership with Allen County Public Library (ACPL), the largest public genealogy library in the United States, to digitize millions of historical records making them available online for the first time at Footnote.com. The ACPL collections feature unique American and international records including family histories, city directories, military records, and historical newspapers.

As part of the partnership, all ACPL records digitized by Footnote.com will be made available at the library for free. For those who cannot travel to the library, these records can be accessed from a personal computer with a Footnote.com membership.

Footnote.com also has agreements with The National Archives, FamilySearch, the Center for Research Libraries, and numerous local archives.

Footnote.com is more than just an online repository for original documents. In addition to hosting millions of records, Footnote.com supports a community of people that are passionate about a variety of topics relating to history.

Footnote.com creates an environment where members can share their content and insights, ranging from major historical events to personal accounts and family histories. Footnote.com, together with its members, is revealing a side of history that few have seen before.

**Infobase Publishing Announces Launch of Infobase eBooks**

**www.infobasepublishing.com**

Infobase Publishing recently announced the launch of Infobase eBooks, its new eBook platform. Initially, more than 1,800 current and backlist Infobase titles will be available as eBooks, and going forward, almost all of their new publications will be available in both print and eBook formats—with several hundred new eBooks introduced each season.

These eBooks span a wide range of subject areas, both reference and nonfiction—from history, science, and literature to geography, social
issues, the arts, and biographies.

Infobase eBooks are convenient, simple to use, and great for research. Features of Infobase eBooks include easy access, unlimited simultaneous use, a user-friendly interface, cross-searching, downloadable MARC records, helpful citations, a dictionary tool, password-protected notes, custom bookmarks, the ability to print, e-mail, and save pages, usage tracking, and reporting for librarians.

Infobase Publishing’s imprints include Facts on File, Chelsea House, and Ferguson Publishing.

ZoomWare—Computer Magnification Software

www.GetZoomWare.com

ZoomWare is computer magnification software developed by Ai Squared, a small, community-focused company based in Manchester Center, Vermont.

ZoomWare has the potential for many applications in the library setting. A simple and affordable screen magnifier such as ZoomWare allows any user who requires it the option to enlarge everything on the screen. In addition to magnification, ZoomWare also allows the user to change screen tinting and adjust the size and color of the mouse pointer and cursor locator triangles. These settings do not have to be permanent and can be restored back to the original settings at any time.

ZoomWare is also a great addition to library workstations. Staff members will be able to enlarge the text on their screens as they check books in and out. Users can adjust and save their own personal settings at any time so when they are working, their settings are applied, and when someone else logs in, they can reset them to their own preferences.

Thyme Calendar Suite

www.extrosoft.com

Thyme is a robust, Web-based calendar suite. It can be used as a personal planner, a company or organization’s event calendar, an RSS gateway, an iCalendar service, an application embedded into your PHP-enabled website or intranet. (Note: PHP is a widely used general-purpose scripting language that is especially suited for Web development and can be embedded into HTML.)

Thyme features simple, Web-based installation. It is customizable, easily updated, and includes multi-language support, RSS feed modules, e-mail notifications, and a wide variety of authentication modules.

TitlePlayer Debuts Newest Preloaded Audiobook Player

www.titleplayer.com

TitlePlayer offers two innovative preloaded audiobook products: the TitlePlayer Classic and the new TitlePlayer Ticket, which was designed specifically to appeal to younger audiences. The TitlePlayer Classic is a closed system preloaded audio player that comes with a AAA battery, earbuds, and a USB connector. The TitlePlayer Ticket is a credit-card-sized model that also offers a backlit LCD screen, and an FM transmitter to use for listening in your car or on your home stereo.

Libraries can acquire more than one thousand different titles on either player in a price range that meets the demands of any budget. Fully rechargeable with no downloads or headphones needed, libraries can offer the ease and pleasure of audiobook listening in a new, convenient format.

LibGuides: Web 2.0 for Libraries

www.springshare.com

LibGuides is a popular content management and knowledge sharing system for libraries, and provides a way for any library to become a Web 2.0 library. Librarians can use LibGuides to create dynamic subject guides that include social features like tagging, bookmarking, RSS feeds, user ratings, and comments.

More than 4,100 librarians at 250 libraries use LibGuides every day to share information and connect with patrons, wherever they are.

LibGuides was developed by Springshare, a company with a mission to develop practical, affordable, and useful Web 2.0 applications built specifically for libraries and educational institutions.

ST Imaging Offers New and Enhanced ST200X Series Digital Microfilm Viewers and Scanners

www.stimaging.com

ST Imaging is a leading manufacturer of all-digital microfilm viewing and retrieval systems. The company recently introduced its ST200X Series offering, which uniquely adds ultra fiche to its existing range of image view and capture capabilities. Like the preceding ST200 product, it is...
a demand-based digitizing scanner for roll microfilm, microfiche, film slides, opaque card, and microcard media. It allows staff and other film researchers to use a PC to view, scan, fax, e-mail, or print a microfilm image. Specifically designed for library user requirements, the ST200X Series products bring secure network environment compatibility, ease of use, digital quality images, and new “digital” life to microform reference collections in libraries.

Now Read Consumer Reports Immediately on Gale’s Online Resources—New Agreement Eliminates Embargo

Gale and Consumers Union of the United States, Inc. have recently revised their partnership to continue to offer Consumer Reports titles in full text, but now with no embargo. “Through this newly revised license agreement, Gale customers will no longer have to wait 90 days to read current issues of Consumer Reports,” said Jason Bass, associate publisher, general reference and periodicals at Gale. “Users can now enjoy immediate access to the most current Consumer Reports news from Gale through InfoTrac and other Gale online products.”

Consumers Union is an expert, independent, nonprofit organization, whose mission is to work for a fair, just, and safe marketplace for all consumers. Consumers Union publishes Consumer Reports, Consumer Reports on Health, Consumer Reports Money Adviser, and Consumer Reports Annual Buying Guide.

Rosen Offers Customization Options for Teen Health and Wellness Database

Libraries can now easily add their own local resources to the new, customizable Hotlines page on Teen Health and Wellness. This unique feature lets librarians add their own content to the Hotlines page to accompany the national resources provided by the database. The easy-to-use Hotlines editor lets libraries make Teen Health and Wellness their own by adding user-generated content to best serve their own community needs.

Librarians can also ensure the nonfiction and fiction books local teens love best and read most are on the Teen Health and Wellness recommended reading lists. Now teens can suggest books to be added to the “for further reading” category for any entry in the database. Simply select an entry, and click to its reading list. The new feedback link lets users send book suggestions directly to the Teen Health and Wellness editorial team for inclusion in the entry.

Popular database content is now available through Really Simple Syndication (RSS). Homepage features “In the News,” “Dr. Jan’s Corner,” and “Did You Know?” are now offered for use in news readers and blogs. These free feeds include headlines, summaries, and links to Teen Health and Wellness for more information.

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