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OLA Quarterly



A Day in the Life

What Goes On at
Libraries in Oregon

Winter 2005

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**Upcoming
Issue**

Spring 2006
??

A Day in the Life

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A Day in the Life:

What Goes On at Libraries in Oregon

It is amazing to hear about the different endeavors and projects that library employees are working on in Oregon libraries. However, it's just as amazing that you often never hear these stories. People who work in libraries tend not to be the greatest self-promoters, and often shy away from accolades. Not that there is a need to commemorate each time someone checks out a book, but when was the last time you gave your director or co-worker a high five, or celebrated the completion of a project in the same way that touchdowns get celebrated during football season?

At the 2003 OLA Conference, the Support Staff Division (SSD) sponsored a session called "Now It Can Be Told." A panel of librarians and library staff discussed the different roles they play in libraries. The roles were varied and challenging, from the director of a small public library who was equally at home wielding a broom or a budget proposal to a support staffer who spoke at international conferences. The panel presentations and subsequent discussion was lively and inspiring; since then, SSD has wanted to bring the excitement of that session to a wider audience.

In the last OLA Quarterly, President Leah Griffith wrote of a need to embrace and thrive on change. In this issue SSD presents snapshots of those who are doing exactly that in their everyday work. We call it "A Day in the Life." These are all people making a difference in today's libraries. How are

they doing it? First, they have developed a sense of pride and ownership that inspirational speaker Judy Pearson describes. Second, they are willing to step up to the challenges that WLA President Martha Parsons presents by becoming involved and learning the values and rewards of contributing to the library profession. Third, they know the importance of humor and creativity, as Pam North demonstrates in her article about keeping it light.

Embracing change requires a willingness to grow and go above and beyond the normal duties assigned to a job. From Robin Beerbower's description of a day in the life of a conference planner, to the power of collaborative communication and eagerness for positive change that Sherry Buchanan describes, each author shares a picture of how they handle and embrace change.

From the typical hectic day that Oregon State University's Lisa Conaster describes, to Susan Gilmont from the Hatfield Marine Science Center, each provides us with a brief glimpse of the incredible number of hats one can wear during the day. Portland State's Carolee Harrison discovers by taking her book repair workshop around the state that she has learned an incredible amount about the scope of library work outside of her home library. Mother, wife, and rancher Deniece Davis, a Library Technician III at the Oregon Institute of Technology, compares and contrasts the rhythm of the seasons in her many roles.

It's not just the paid employees that are embracing change in Oregon libraries. Volunteers make a huge contribution to Oregon libraries as Jim Willhite, a volunteer for the Willamette Valley Genealogical Society and the State Library, proves in his article.

As we compiled these stories, there was never any problem getting people to share what they have been doing. All of the authors have an excitement and belief in their jobs and what they can accomplish. It's time to start celebrating the work that is being done. There should never be an OLA annual award that does not receive any nominations. The next time you notice something special happening in your library, give your director or co-worker a high five, or even nominate them for an award. Until then, enjoy the incredible passion described in *A Day in the Life*.

A note on terminology: The OLA Executive Board adopted an SSD-sponsored resolution on inclusive language several years ago. In most articles in this issue, "library staff" is used instead of "librarian," even if "librarian" was not used in an exclusionary way. However, in a few instances, we've left "librarian" in, even though it refers to library staff at all levels.

Jey Wann and Bill Kelm,
Guest Editors

OLAQ

Do You Own It?

by **Judy Pearson**
Professional Speaker,
Unconquerable Spirit Programs



As a kid I never understood the people who work in libraries. They always seemed so stiff and strangely different. In the little town where I grew up it was Ms. Hensely who was Tehama County Library's gate keeper. She didn't rock, she ruled. Frankly, she scared me into submission. She was always shushing me over her dark, horn rimmed glasses and clearing her throat when she thought I had snuck enough peeks at the latest *National Geographic Magazine*. It was as if she thought she owned the place or something. Well, in a way she did. It wasn't until much later in life that I grew to appreciate that sense of pride and ownership.

I have often wondered: What is the spirit that drives these people to do what they do? I sense it is not "just a job" to them, it's much more. Maybe, it's their love and thirst for knowledge. No, that's not all of it. I get the impression it is that sense of pride of ownership and a place where they feel they can make a difference.

Pride of ownership meaning: Taking pride in oneself and the surrounding community. Nowadays, I feel that sense of pride and ownership when I visit my local library. People are friendly, extremely helpful and pride themselves on being of service.

This is extraordinary considering how much lip service corporate America gives to the word "service." Each year, millions of dollars go into training people to be courteous, friendly and helpful. Yet complacency seems to run rampant in our society. And a number of people, for whatever reason, believe in the "other guy will do it" syndrome. Well, the problem with that is that the other guy didn't do it because he/she thought you would do it.

It is my observation that the library is one of the few places where pride of ownership and service really mean something. Library employees consider the library more than a job or a place where books, tapes, computers, etc., are stored. They enjoy being of service. Scouring the halls of knowledge in search of whatever is requested, they will pursue and persevere until they have reached their intended goal. It doesn't matter if they're knowledgeable about the subject or not, they never say, "That's not my department," or that inarguable word, "no." Department stores of America and other such institutions should stand up and take notice of real customer service.

The library is a place where knowledge fires our imagination to unlimited possibilities. It has been said that the library is the heart of its community. If the library is the heart of its community then the people who work there are its pulse.

This past April, I was invited to speak at the Oregon Library Association's annual conference. In anticipation of this article I took the opportunity to ask a number of attendees their opinions on these three questions. Here is what collectively they had to say when asked:

What do you like most about your job?

The opportunity to express myself creatively: To be helpful in creative ways.

I like seeing light bulbs go off when a child learns a new word or phrase.



Meeting people from all walks of life is fun and sometimes challenging.

I enjoy learning about the latest technology and newest innovations.

I am surrounded by books. What more can I say?

What would you say is the most challenging part of your work?

Being sensitive to vastly different personality types is challenging to me.

Connecting with people from dissimilar backgrounds and languages can be challenging.

Understanding the needs of the public and how I can serve them best.

Keeping abreast of the most recent information on any given subject continues to test me.

Can you recall a funny story or unusual event at work?


We found a cat in the book depository one day.

It made me smile one day when a fellow got a crush on me because I was so helpful, supportive and upbeat.

The power went off and we conducted business by candlelight.

Isn't it curious that not one of the people I surveyed mentioned owning the library? Maybe I'm wrong about my observations of pride of ownership, but I don't think so. Wouldn't the world be better off if we took pride and ownership in what we do, who we are and how we serve the world around us? As First Lady/Senator Hillary Clinton puts it: "It takes a village to raise a child." I believe it also takes a vil-

lage to raise an adult to their full potential. We all have a stake in each other's futures; the library and its staff are an intricate part of the process.

Libraries, and to those who work in libraries, I salute you! Your pride of ownership and undaunted willingness to be of service to your community makes an unquestionable difference in the lives of so many. 

About the Author

Judy Pearson is a professional speaker and author of *The Unconquerable Spirit Series: Ki Assertiveness*. You can contact her at: judyspeak@aol.com, 515 NW Saltzman Road, Portland, OR 97229 or 503-520-0105.

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Some Like it Hot, Some Like it Cold: A Day in the Life of a Conference Planner

by Robin Beerbower
Salem Public Library



“**B**ut they made me turn down the heat in the Cowlitz* room last session and now they are saying it's too cold??” I whined. Welcome to the world of conference planning and management, where the rooms are never the right temperature and proper bathroom maintenance and repair (especially the ladies’) is paramount.

I was the vice-chair for the Oregon Library Association’s 2005 conference and this is my story.

I began my relationship with the OLA conference in June 2004 when I was thrilled to learn the 2006 conference would be held at the new conference center in my hometown of Salem. I have attended many state conferences in my 30-plus-year library career, but other than co-organizing a pre-conference five years ago, I had never been involved in the planning. I thought 2006 would be a good year to offer my services to the conference committee. The next thing I knew I was hearing my name and the words “Conference Chair for 2006.” I panicked. “I can’t do this! I’m a paraprofessional who does outreach services and readers’ advisory.

What do I know about conference planning??” But after many reassurances of help, support, and a few ego-boosting compliments from the library director and other library staff, I began to think I could rise to the challenge.

So I entered a required “apprenticeship,” serving as the 2005 vice-chair. In August 2004, with knees quaking, I attended my first conference meeting. Over the next eight months, I learned just about all there is to know about conference planning. We chose programs, assigned liaisons, and managed equipment requests and costs. I learned what to do when I felt like hiding in a corner because a program was cancelled shortly before the conference, and how to smooth things over when the hotel coffee shop had to be substituted for an out-of-commission meeting room. Most of all, I learned that attending a conference and helping to plan a conference are two entirely different experiences.

Thursday, April 7: Taking the Cake 7:00 a.m.

Cindy Gibbon, the 2005 conference chair, and I were in the conference office bright and early to ensure all was ready for the day. As committee members trickled in, rubbing their eyes and sipping giant cups of coffee, we began psyching ourselves for the day. Surrounded by computers, printers, white boards, flip charts, easels and data projectors, we examined the schedule and figured out our assignments. I grabbed my ever-present equipment grid and hurried downstairs to the atrium to check on the rooms and additional equipment requests. After making arrangements with the hotel staff to remove or add wireless mikes, podiums, tables, etc., I made a quick dash into the rest room where I discovered a stall door was missing. Yikes! I immediately notified the hotel staff and, happily, they were quick to respond.

*Meeting room names have been changed to protect the innocent.



8:30 a.m.

I ran back to the conference office to quickly check my e-mail, then rushed to the banquet room for Mike Eisenberg's rousing and inspiring keynote speech.

10:00 a.m.

It was no-conflict exhibits time, but I had no time to peruse the vendors. I dashed to the atrium to ensure the directional signs by PedCo, the exhibits set-up company, were in place. I decided to check the coffee shop-turned-meeting room one more time. When I entered, the aroma of bacon and pancakes lingered but the staff had removed the tables and set it up as a meeting room with a black curtain across the arched doorway. I was asked to open the curtain and as I did, the metal pipe frame came crashing down on my head. I took a moment to be sure there was no real damage and ran off to check in with my assigned room and presenters, and to do an attendance count.

12:30 p.m.

Lunch! Woody Allen was once quoted as saying, "The food here is terrible, and the portions are too small." (Remember the polenta in 2004?) I am happy that this quote could not have applied to the 2005 banquet food. In fact, the quote could have been, "The food here is terrific, and the portions are too big!" It was amusing to read one attendee's evaluation comment on the lunch, "... I would avoid dessert if it weren't sitting there so pretty."

As I wolfed down my chicken wrap and watched the special awards presentation, my mind was also tracking what needed to be done for the afternoon programs. I was a little chagrined to have to miss the OLA presidential candidates' speeches, but room checking duty called.

1:50 p.m.

After I tried to troubleshoot a couple of technology issues (I eventually had to call

our tech wonder, Doug Hanke), I did the room count and noted it on the monitor report in the office. I was just checking my computer for e-mail when a committee member rushed into the office to report that the Cowlitz room was too cold, the same room that had been too warm the session before. I sighed, took care of the thermostat (again), then on my way back to the office ran into the banquet chef. I asked if the chocolate spoon cake would be served for Friday's lunch as I hadn't been able to eat a piece the night before. He appeared concerned and ten minutes later a hotel staff member delivered an entire chocolate cake to the conference office—compliments of the chef! After I ate a giant piece, I was energized enough to hit the floor again.

3:00 p.m.

Since I hadn't had time to visit the exhibits earlier in the morning, I zipped over to introduce myself to the vendors and promote next year's conference site. Since I can never resist a shopping opportunity, I purchased a few trinkets to haul back home. I grabbed a cookie from the coffee break table and headed back to the atrium to again check on rooms and liaisons, and then introduce the presenter for the 4 p.m. session. As much as I wanted to stay and listen to Leigh Anne Jasheway-Bryant, one of Oregon's funniest people, I had more chores to do.

5:30 p.m.

I quickly checked all of the rooms to ensure they were cleared for the OLA business meetings, then I sat—finally—to enjoy the Outreach Round Table meeting.

6:00 p.m.

After the meeting, I rushed back to the hotel room to quickly change into a nicer outfit in preparation for the President's reception. After turning in my ticket for an icy margarita, I settled in to see if I would



win a raffle prize. After chatting with a few colleagues, it was time for the banquet, where I was lucky enough to sit next to Molly Gloss, the featured speaker.

9:00 p.m.

I made a brief stop at the PNLA Leadership reception, then found myself back in the conference office fine-tuning my own presentation for the next morning. Back in September, I had agreed to give a readers' advisory session on nonfiction for fiction readers and hadn't quite finished annotating my book talks. It occurred to me that trying to prepare a presentation and play a major part on the conference committee might not have been such a good idea.

10:30 p.m.

I finished my notes and hit print—only to find that the printer was not working. Oh well. Handwritten notes would have to do.


11:00 p.m.

Cindy returned to the hotel room. We discussed the day and plans for the morning before going to sleep, gathering our strength so we could wake up and do it all over again.

What I Learned

I learned that a major conference committee member doesn't have much time to attend sessions, but the skills learned far outweighed any presentation or session attended. I also learned that the conference cannot be planned and organized by a single person. It requires a cadre of dedicated people from all kinds of libraries who are willing to give up a major amount of time to ensure the conference is a success. I also learned what really goes on behind the scenes and the sheer number of details that are being managed in order for everything to run smoothly. Even though the days were long and at times I felt frustrated, frantic, and exhausted, I was also exhilarated and challenged, and I had fun.

But you know the most important lesson I learned? Whenever I attend a conference, I will never, ever, complain about the room temperature!

I hope to see you at the 2006 conference, April 5–7, at Salem's beautiful new conference center! 

About the Author

Robin Beerbower has been on the staff at Salem Public Library for more than thirty years. Her many duties include serving as the outreach librarian for the home bound patron program, working the reference desk at the West Salem Branch, and managing service accounts for the library's ISP, OPEN.org. Robin's favorite library duty is readers' advisory, for which she showed an early affinity, presenting her first book talk during show-and-tell in the first grade.

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OLA President
Leah Griffith

presents:

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thriving on change embrace the possibilities

A Day in the Life:

My Job is Changing

by **Susan R. Gilmont**
Hatfield Marine Science Center

*Change is inevitable,
except from vending machines.*
—Anonymous



Date selected: Tuesday, May 3, 2005.

Workplace: Marilyn Potts Guin Library, Hatfield Marine Science Center, Oregon State University.

Type of library: Academic, specialized branch library.

7:55 a.m.

I arrive at the library. There's a light fog and a salty tang in the air. I can hear seals barking from the docks across the bay. On my way in, I walk past potted flowers and an articulated whale skeleton. I open the building and turn on computers. One student is already in the library (we check out keys to HMSC students), and greets me blearily as I turn on the lights. I am one of three permanent employees here: the librarian and two library technicians. Today, the librarian is attending meetings on our main campus. My part-time co-worker won't arrive until later, so I start the day alone.

I usually don't turn on my computer immediately. Instead, I check the Ariel

workstation to see if any interlibrary loans have come in overnight. One has, and I forward it.

8:10–10:00 a.m.

I open my office, fire up the computer and read my mail. The libsup-l list is quite active, but the current subject doesn't interest me, so I delete the messages. Libsup-l has expanded my horizons, but they do go on sometimes. I check the "generic" library mailbox where requests are sent. My co-worker handles most of our interlibrary loans, but with so small a staff, we have to be cross-trained to cover for one another. Handling mailbox requests helps me stay current.

Today, there's a request from Mexico via the IAMSILIC Z39.50 Distributed Library (<http://library.csUMB.edu/cyamus/ill/search.php>). The Distributed Library is an initiative of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSILIC). It's a Web-based portal to marine library holdings, and provides a way for marine libraries around the world, many of which don't have OCLC, to access needed materials. The Distributed Library became active in 2002. Every year since, my library has been its most active lender. I print two copies of the request. A patron asks how to get set up for wireless service for her laptop. I tell her who to contact.

OCLC's ILLiad software has changed my job. It makes it possible for me to telecommute to our main campus and support operations there. ILLiad was such a huge success with students at our main campus that when it was inaugurated the ILL workload surged by 20 to 25 percent. I began helping the main campus ILL staff with their requests when they were struggling with staff turnovers and the increased workload. Obviously, I can't help with their lending, but I can assist with borrowing and place requests for OSU students and



personnel. I'm still a little bemused by the fact that this technology makes it possible for me to work "alongside" colleagues fifty miles away. I process borrowing requests for the main campus.

I rarely get through my "on-campus" time without interruptions. Today, I register two visiting scientists from New Zealand and give them keys to the library. They've been here before, so no orientation is needed. I note their names; the Center's administration has asked the library staff to help them track visiting researchers. Shortly before 10:00, my co-worker arrives.

10:00 a.m. - Noon

The Mexican library ILL is for an article available at our main library. OSU's Valley Library has generously agreed to help us support IAMSILC libraries. I request the article from the Valley Library. While checking the catalog, I notice two incorrectly barcoded volumes and report the error. I send out a request for duplicate document serials to another marine library. I have some claims for missing journal issues left over from yesterday, and place them.

This term, students from the Corvallis campus are in residence here in Newport taking an intensive course in marine biology (Biology 450). A current class assignment involves a paper on coastal ecology. I help a student use the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts database to find some relevant journal articles. I am a bit surprised to learn that this Oceanography student has never used our most popular database.

I put in some time on one of our major projects. Last year, the Center's administration asked the library staff to develop a bibliography of publications by HMSC authors and post it on the Web. The HMSC Station Bibliography (<http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/guin/StationBibliography.html>) now has over 1,700 entries. My current task is to unify and standardize HMSC

authors' names. I go into the main ProCite file and edit authors.

1:00-3:00 p.m.

I sort and distribute the incoming campus, Summit and U.S. mail. The mail is changing these days: there are fewer print journal issues and more online subscriptions. Our journal display area is pocked with fliers advertising online subscriptions. Within two or three years, I should need to spend less time claiming and binding paper copies. Freed-up time will be shifted to other projects.

I check out incoming Summit (a Northwest academic library consortium) items and books requested from our main campus. I process Summit returns. I check in new and returned interlibrary loans. One incoming ILL is for an "all-but-thesis" graduate student living out of state. I make sure the book will go out by Priority Mail tomorrow.

My co-worker usually gets the phones, but while she is at lunch I take an interesting call. Someone wants to have their wedding in the Library Seminar Room. The father of the bride is a retired HMSC faculty member. At times like this, I'm happy to punt to the librarian.

A library student assistant arrives for work. Our student workers are high school and community college students; the graduate students here usually prefer to work in laboratories rather than the library, and we don't have any permanent undergraduates. This one plays bass in a grunge band, and often comes to work with tales of his musical adventures. Not today. There's a lot of photocopying, so I get him started on copying and document delivery.

3:00-5:00 p.m.

I register another patron, a new researcher on a one-year appointment. I give him a brief orientation to the library. I try to update our Web pages, but new security



blocks me. I e-mail the library Web group to request help. I help another student use the ASFA database. More student workers arrive. I assign tasks and resolve minor problems. Our student assistants' daily jobs revolve around circulation, shelving, journal check-in and a good deal of photocopying. They are cross-trained to work in all these areas.


The last hour of the day, I prepare for tomorrow's team meeting. We are gearing up for summer term and considering how to enhance services for resident graduate students, summer students, and students in the Oregon Coast Community College's Aquarium Science program, a cooperative venture with OSU. My assignment is to provide lists of summer classes and old help sheets, to see what needs updating and what can be used with minor changes.

As the day ends, I sweep through the library. We have to be sure that library users who are not affiliated with HMSC leave when the building closes at 5:00. At times, we have had members of the public who didn't want to leave the computers.

I suppose to someone from a large library, my day must seem like a month in the country. What can those who work at small branch libraries have to say to those who work in production environments? Well, we do have our hectic days. More importantly, branch library staff can make unique contributions to their main libraries. Because I work across departmental lines, I sometimes have a better grasp of the workflow. My point of view is not limited to one department or one task. As a staff member at a small library, I have the luxury of getting to know our patrons, and I am at times better able to see the impact of changes in services on those patrons. I can offer these gifts of connection and perspective to our main library.

You wear a lot of hats at a branch library. You have to be versatile. As libraries move towards more fully exploiting the potential of the electronic environment,

workers will need to be more versatile, too. At this point in my career, I find that I want to expand my skill set in order to be able to do more. Ten years ago, that would have been a bigger problem, because I live in such a rural area. Nowadays, it doesn't matter so much if you live in town or in the country, because you can sharpen your skills online.

May 3, 2005 was a quiet day at the Guin Library. Today, there were no phone calls from bars asking what fish lives the longest, or upset landowners convinced that their neighbors are causing their beach front property to erode. Nobody complained about a fine, and all the student assistants came to work. All the same, change is in the air, and I feel it. 

About the Author

Susan Gilmont has worked for the OSU Libraries for 26 years. She writes, "I'm a poetry hound: the Guin Library has a poetry corner in the staff office and a haiku page by the copier where students and patrons can make contributions."



Are Library Support Staff Up to the Challenge?

by **Martha Parsons**
Vice President,
Washington Library Association
Energy Program Library
Washington State University



I've been pondering lately: Do we as support staff really want what we say we want? Do we really want recognition and respect for our contributions to the profession? In May 2003, the Congress on Professional Education: Focus on Library Support (COPE 3) opened communication and many new doors for support staff inclusion into the American Library Association (ALA), and into the profession. These new opportunities bring responsibility, and I've been wondering, are we up to the challenge? And more personally, are you up to the challenge?

One outcome of COPE 3 was a set of recommendations. The ALA is taking these recommendations seriously and making amazing efforts to incorporate them into its planning, both immediate and future. Since COPE 3, the ALA has been working to incorporate inclusive language into everything they produce, the ALA Council has passed a policy statement on "Inclusiveness and Mutual Respect of Library Workers," membership dues have been lowered for support staff, and a "Conference Within A Conference" was held in conjunction with the 2005 Annual Conference which provided programming specifically of interest to support staff. Support staff have been appointed to committees, and committees are actively working on

plans to accredit Library Technical Assistant Programs, and looking at options for certifying individuals. These are just a few of the efforts that the Association has accomplished or is actively pursuing. Library support staff and library workers are also integral pieces of the language in the ALA Draft 2010 Strategic Plan. Without question these are major efforts that will change the future of library support staff involvement in the profession. What you might be surprised to know is that very few support staff are actively involved in the work of accomplishing these goals.

Here are some numbers to help put it into perspective: According to ALA statistics, there are currently somewhere around 400,000 employees in U.S. libraries. It is estimated that approximately two-thirds work as support staff. That means that in the U.S. there are about 264,000 library support staff. Current membership in the ALA is somewhere around 64,000, and of those, membership in the Library Support Staff Interests Round Table (LSSIRT) is around 700. Of these 700, I would guess there are only about twenty who are actively involved in the Association. So, are we going to sit back and expect librarians and ALA staff to do the work that it will take to make these changes happen? The door of opportunity is open. The time is now. We need support staff to step forward and take on the challenge that is being presented to us.

So, what can you do? A start would be to familiarize yourself with the *COPE 3 Implementation Recommendations* (<http://www.ala.org/ala/hrdr/educprofdev/congressprofessional.htm>—click on "Recommendations Update" and scroll down to "Congress III"). If you are an LSSIRT member, and you see something that you are interested in working on, contact the LSSIRT President, Ali Poffinberger (ali.poff@duke.edu), and let her know you are interested. Some of the committee assignments do require ALA conference attendance, but not all. Often e-mail and/or



conference calls are all that are needed to brainstorm and gather ideas on the next steps to take.

Besides efforts on the national level, and whether or not you are an LSSIRT member, you can also look for ways to initiate and actively work on similar recommendations that will still make a difference on a local, state, or regional level. Many of the national recommendations will need acceptance at these levels to be successful. Some suggestions for ways to get involved follow.

Is inclusive language used in professional literature and e-lists you read? If not, anyone can send a considerate e-mail to whomever is responsible for the non-inclusive language and ask that inclusive language be used in the future. (A note of appreciation for inclusive language can also make an impression.)


As the only independent international association for support staff, the Council on Media/Library Technicians (COLT) is always looking for volunteers to work on projects that they are undertaking. Go to their Web site at <http://colt.ucr.edu/> to find contacts and information on their activities.

Does your state have a support staff association? In Oregon, it is the Support Staff Division (SSD) of the Oregon Library Association (OLA). More information and contact information is on their Web site at <http://library.willamette.edu/ssd/>.

Beyond the Support Staff Division, consider opportunities in other parts of OLA—the Board, other divisions, round tables, or committees. There usually are a variety of opportunities available. You just need to ask. Contact the editor of a journal such as this one and volunteer to write an article. Offer your database, graphic design, or photography skills to association officers or conference planners. Plan a workshop or informal networking gathering. Give a presentation or participate in a panel discussion at a conference.

Most importantly, you probably won't know what needs to be done unless you

ask. Be prepared to have a conversation to figure out what you would like to do and what you would be good at. Any good leader would be delighted to get an e-mail or a phone call from someone saying, "how can I help?"

As one who has been active in library support staff issues for over a decade, I've listened to and observed hundreds of support staff discuss their work situations, and I've served in positions where I've needed to recruit volunteers to serve in various roles. My experience has been that there seems to be a lack of interest in getting involved among library support staff. Why is it so easy to sit back and complain that we aren't treated fairly, or are snubbed, but then do nothing about it? Especially now! The door is open and a movement is underway to implement fixes to many of the things we've been complaining about. Support staff have incredible skills to contribute to the profession. Why keep yours hidden? Learn first-hand the value and rewards of contributing to the library profession. The personal and professional returns on your investment of time and talent will be priceless. 

About the Author

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The Accidental Library Tourist

by *Carolee Harrison*
Portland State University Library



Several people have told me after a book repair class that they can tell how much I care for books by the way I hold them. I'd never noticed it until then. When I pick up a book, I hold it firmly so the case stays square with the text block. When I open one, I don't let one cover dangle unsupported. It's a habit that unconsciously reveals how much time I've spent handling books.

My regular job is to sit at a workbench and repair library books. My range of movement is between my table, the board shear, and the book press; if someone were to come in and supply me with regular water and glue refills I would hardly need to leave my seat. Worn-out books are brought to me by the box load from the circulating collection, which is housed in another building. On a normal day, I might interact with books more frequently than with people.

I always expected to stay deep in the hidden workshop of Technical Services as a career, so emerging to teach book repair classes changed my view of my work. At first I feared public speaking, but at the risk of sounding like an evangelist who's heard "the call," I couldn't fight the urge to stand up before Oregon's library workers and spread the good word about repair techniques that were both simple to do and based on concepts of book conservation. I

could sense it like a haunting; there were too many books out there being mended with double-stitch binder tape and unstable adhesives. I had a mental picture of myself clad in an apron like the Iron Chef of conservation, a somewhat different image than I probably presented to the first workshop.

Before speaking the first time, I was so nervous that I dressed up for the OLA conference in lipstick and a new blouse as though I was anchoring the evening news, then nearly dropped a glue-laden brush in my lap during the demonstration. I quickly figured out that doing even simple things in front of an audience is suddenly like dancing backwards in high heels—I had to learn moves I'd been doing for years all over again.

I've lost count of how many classes Kris Kern and I have given over the past five years. It's a bit easier to think in terms of where we have been. From our home base at Portland State University, we've traveled as far as Baker City, La Grande, and Bend; northwards to Kent, Washington; westwards to Lincoln City and Newport; and closer in to Hood River, Eugene and Newberg. Travel for these classes is the bulk of my tourism experience in my new home state. Not to dwell on how much of a homebody I've been, but without the opportunity to travel that the OLA/SSD workshops gave me, I might still be quite mistaken about Oregon's size and diversity, wrongly assuming that the entire state is a rainforest and that the I-5 corridor is "Central Oregon." Thanks to our many book mending tours, I've stood in the wind where the open sea rolls in to meet the land's end, looked out over miles of sagebrush and seen the wagon-wheel ruts that defined the Oregon Trail, seen the Three Sisters half-shrouded in a billow of clouds, watched the moon rise over a desert oasis and the sunset reaching golden rays down into the Columbia gorge—and enjoyed such warm hospitality that I often felt as though I could be on vacation.

Taking the mending lab on the road involves a full day of packing that reminds



me of the way my mother would prepare our family of four for a week-long camping trip. The idea, now as then, is to make do with only as much as you can carry, but to “rough it” as little as possible by packing to the point of bursting. When the final box is taped and ready to be loaded into the car, my usual announcement is, “The caravan is packed.” Fortunately Kris drives a late-model Jetta with an ingenious bottomless trunk, capable of swallowing at least five large boxes packed to immobilizing weight with library books, bookbinding tools, jars of PVA, and the necessary burden of bricks to weight the finished repair jobs while the glue dries. The trips I’ve taken in my own car have been more precarious. The Mazda’s back end sagged as I chugged through the mountains and a thick, wet fog on a harrowing night drive home from Redmond. I wondered whether I or the library books would be missed first if I didn’t make it back.

Likening our conservation caravan to a carnival or road show appeals to my pagan heart, inspiring a few escapist fantasies of pulling up my loose Portland roots and mending books out of a van or a tent. I could convince myself that it’s not an unrealistic business idea—after all, everyone has at least one book in their life that is falling apart, a book they wish they could pass on to their children, give to a friend, or just read again themselves, if only it wasn’t threatening to disintegrate. “Books are organic material,” as Kris reminds us during the workshops, and even books that don’t receive the rough treatment that library books endure eventually decay on the shelf, where they’re exposed to inadvertent damage from light, heat, and humidity. Most people have one book that needs fixing, and libraries have many; I daydream of being the one to swoop into town, save the day and drive off with flying colors.

On our first trip through Pendleton, Kris and I stopped at Como’s Pizza for lunch. The restaurant owner herself came out to take our order and we fell into conversation about the snapshots from her Parisian vaca-

tion that were stapled to the wall. Eventually she asked us what brought us into town. “We’re teaching book repair in Baker City,” we said. At the words book repair she took a new interest in us. “Hold on a minute. I need to ask my husband something.”

In five minutes she returned with a loved book from the early 20th century, a baseball almanac with black-and-white pictures and paper the color of weak tea. The cloth spine hung loose and frayed. She opened the book to show me how three generations of her family’s men and boys had signed the back end sheet in lead pencil. “Can you fix this?” she asked. Within minutes she had packed her heirloom into a clean pizza box for me, a complete stranger five minutes before, to take away and repair. I suddenly felt like I could make a living if I just wore a sign reading BOOKS REPAIRED and walked down the main street.

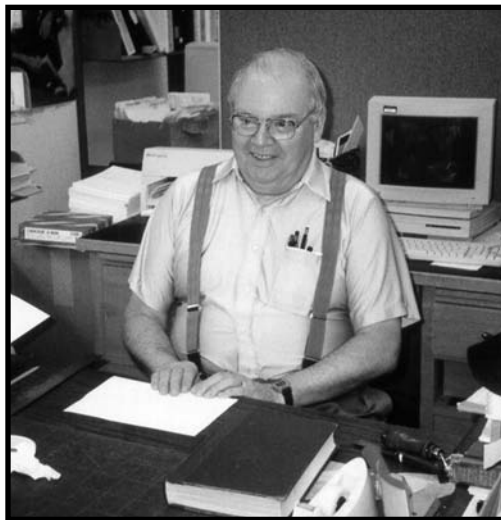
Besides inspiring the occasional fantasy of going “on tour,” teaching book repair around the state has also taught me a lot about the scope of library work in the world outside of my downtown Portland unit. Meeting women and men who individually make up one-fifth or more of their library’s paid staff and are responsible for everything from answering reference calls to taping on dust jacket covers was a reality check, alerting me to the need for economy and durability in repair processes as well as to my own relative insulation in academia. Despite our institutions’ varied clientele, patterns of usage, and distribution of labor, we all had the love of books and the drive to promote reading and information in common, as well as the necessity of operating on a shoestring. Using cloth, PVA glue, archival tape and other materials to repair books came as a revelation for some. A traveling salesperson might also make a living touring libraries and offering fabric, paper and adhesives; one librarian took out a dollar and wanted to buy my “pick-up” cleaning eraser on the spot!

The workshops held revelations for
See Accidental Library Tourist page 24



A Day in the Life of a Librarian for a Genealogy Society

by *Jim Willhite*
Oregon State Library



Way back in the early 40s I used to accompany my dad as he delivered heavy black fuel oil to apartment houses and industrial buildings. The first thing he would do upon arrival was find the “Building Engineer,” as he called them; others might use “Maintenance Man” or “Janitor.” These people kept the building functional, with no engineering training, likely only “on the job training.” Similarly, I’m the “librarian” for the Willamette Valley Genealogy Society (WVGS) located in Salem, Oregon—a strictly volunteer position with no formal librarian training or education required.

WVGS has about 150 members, from all walks of life, mostly retired. I retired from the Office of Highway Safety, Federal Highway Administration, as a Highway Engineer in 1988. In 1990 my wife and I returned to Oregon and in the early 90s, I became active in the Society and began acquisition of what is now a sizable collection of genealogical CDs. This slowly evolved into responsibility for all types of genealogical materials, books, microfilms, CDs, etc. I am assisted by three other WVGS members in routine but necessary tasks such as keeping track of the books, audiotapes, and videos in the WVGS collection, managing the acquisition and flow of the periodicals into the State Library’s

collection, and loading any new CDs into the Virtual Drive program.

WVGS is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization dedicated to educating the public on how to do family history research, and to providing the necessary resources to do this research. WVGS has an agreement with the Oregon State Library (OSL) which assists us with this task. OSL provides us with the facility to house the genealogy resources, plus some technical expertise to maintain the computers and microfilm reader-printers. In turn, WVGS provides two members experienced in family history research to assist the public at all times the Reference Room is open, and to answer genealogical correspondence; the genealogical resources and much of the equipment needed to utilize the resources such as the microfilm readers; and other volunteers who do book repair, cataloging, and scanning of archived material.

WVGS’s financial support comes from member dues and donations, occasional small grants, and the sale of WVGS-developed publications. These monies are used to purchase books, periodicals, CDs and sometimes equipment for OSL. Since the collection is housed in the State Library, Oregon material is emphasized, although the collection now includes resources from all states.

I have done this volunteer activity for seven or eight years. Primarily I serve as an acquisitions librarian, and a focal point for donations. I work closely with OSL staff in developing the collection. Another WVGS member and I confer with the OSL assigned coordinator and meet as needed to discuss progress on various issues and any problems concerning OSL staff and WVGS volunteers that may surface. The State Librarian and his staff are truly most helpful in assuring that our needs and the needs of the public are met.

WVGS acquires genealogical material by both purchase and donation. Donated material is from estates, or from the public who feel they would like to make their



genealogical collection available to others. It can be in the form of books, periodicals, newsletters, CDs or even research notes on specific surnames. Donated material often comes in by the bagful or a few boxes, but we have received as many as 26 boxes from a single donation. There is a significant amount of genealogical material that flows into the OSL system on a regular basis. Most of this material goes to my home while it is processed, much to the chagrin of my loving wife. I check all donated material to see if it will be useful to OSL, and also see if we can find a home for material not useful for the OSL collection.

Whether the material is donated or purchased, I check the OSL electronic catalog to be sure they do not already have it. Space is limited in the library so we do not keep duplicate copies with the exception of some Oregon material kept in the Oregon collection.

For a number of years WVGS had a very generous donor who wanted to make the OSL collection of genealogical CDs one of the best in the Northwest. After the collection surpassed several hundred CDs, WVGS invested in a system to install all the CDs onto a hard drive accessible by two computers so it was no longer necessary to handle the CDs individually. This created another major task for the “librarian” (sometimes my spouse—as I attended other business) of loading all the CDs onto the hard drive, most requiring about 25 minutes per CD. OSL’s collection has continued to grow and today is about 500 CDs. We are again looking into how we can best expand it to meet our future needs.


WVGS maintains a limited library of instructional videos and audio cassettes, and books, other than recent membership purchases. Recent purchases are made available to the donor first, and then kept for a short time for other members to look at before turning them over to OSL. Oregon books are an exception and are turned over to OSL as soon as they have been acquired.

Periodicals and newsletters are often donated by members and sometimes received through an exchange program with other societies. WVGS also subscribes to a few of the major genealogical periodicals for OSL.

Books and periodicals OSL has no use for are made available to other societies and libraries at no charge, or put on the monthly meeting sale table, with proceeds going to the WVGS book fund.

As librarian, I maintain a shelf list of WVGS material and the books and CD’s not yet in OSL’s catalog, and lists of genealogical-related periodicals available at OSL. I also write a monthly library report for the WVGS newsletter to keep all members informed.

One of the more nerve wracking aspects of the job is ordering the books and CDs. My biggest fear is ordering something OSL or WVGS already has. Thankfully it has only happened a few times over the many years. The OSL electronic cataloging system is now fully automated, but that was not always the case, and it has gone through numerous transitions, which left glitches and can cause a novice like me problems in trying to be one hundred percent sure something is not in the system.

The other volunteer hat I wear for OSL is doing book repair a half day each week. On occasion this is the first stop for donated books that need a little care before being put into the system for public use. It also alerts me to genealogical books in the OSL system that cannot be repaired, and that need to be replaced. 

About the Author

In 2001, Jim Willhite received the Margaret Epley Volunteer Award from the State Library in recognition of his outstanding service.



A Day in the Life of the Interlibrary Loan Supervisor

by *Lisa Conaster*
Oregon State University



As I began to think about a “day in the life” of my position at Oregon State University (OSU), it was difficult to pick a typical day. My days are hectic and at times a bit unruly; each day involves a different adventure. When things are going well, I affectionately think of it as an exercise in chaos theory. As I considered which day to pick and looked at an overview of a month, I could see a rhythm, so in turn that should mean that individual days also have rhythm. As I looked closely, I began to see the organization in the mayhem. I start each day with an ambitious plan, but it is adjusted frequently and requires flexibility.

Oregon State University Libraries include one main library and two branches. Interlibrary Loan (ILL) is a unit in Access Services. Interlibrary Loan is responsible for coordinating lending and borrowing activities for traditional ILL, Orbis Cascade Alliance, and branch and remote services. During fiscal year 2004/05, OSU Libraries received a grand total of 104,600 requests. This averages out to about 400 requests per working day. This is accomplished by the amazing staff at the Valley and Guin Libraries. I supervise 6.0 full time employees (one works .5 FTE in Circulation) and about 2 FTE of student labor; I also coordinate with staff at the Guin Library, the

branch library in Newport.

In the Valley Library, the largest of the OSU libraries, ILL is fully integrated into Access Services. Circulation is the public services point for Access Services; ILL does not have a separate public service desk. Distribution of ILL materials and requests for appeals of fines related to ILL are handled at Circulation. Collection Maintenance assists with training pagers, serves as paging backup, and handles checking in ILL and Summit materials in Millennium. Overdue notices, renewal notices, pick up your item notices, etc. are sent via e-mail. In addition, all routine ILL questions from patrons are handled by Reference in the Information Commons.

My day is ultimately escorted along by MS Outlook, partially because it is my favorite tool for managing due dates for pending tasks, and partially because it contains my calendar and e-mail. Outlook is my first stop of the day. I start every day by checking for meetings, deadlines, and my “hope I can get this done” list, which today includes implementing RAPID, a fast, cost-effective, innovative resource sharing system designed and implemented by Colorado State University, providing input on a “Quick Guide for ILL” from Reference, responding to a request to change e-mail notices in the circulation module, and of course that in box full of e-mail. Since e-mail is a very popular form of communication used by many of my colleagues, the day starts with e-mail, e-mail and more e-mail.

I start with all the easy e-mails so it doesn't look like I have so many. The easy ones are the e-mails that don't require any follow-up; these are the short e-mails that only require filing, deleting or forwarding. Next I check for staff absences and make sure all the coverage for the day is in place; luckily the wonderful staff in ILL provide any coverage that is needed. Next, I look for messages from patrons or people who seem upset, and respond or delegate the responses. Next, on to questions from colleagues in the library usually asking for



leave time, statistics, input on Web pages or brochures, committee assignments, policies, and the occasional random request (which by the way, was not in my well-thought-out plan for the day). Luckily, some can wait, so I flag them for later. Usually about this time all the flagged items from the day before begin appearing, with me wondering what I was thinking setting all these reminders for this morning! I check the reminders for deadlines or emergencies; none due now so “snooze” those for later.

Now on to those messages about what is happening in the library: the new Central Oregon Community College Librarian and the Associate University Librarian for public services both start soon; we are on target with the strategic plan; someone will be replacing panels in the study rooms, and one of the elevators is not consistently working properly (make mental note to take the stairs today). It’s after 10:00 a.m. already, and I still need to read the various listserv e-mails, including ILLiad-L listserv, RAPID listserv, BTPILL-L, NWILL, and any messages my staff forwarded from the ILL-L and Alliance listservs. Now, I’m quickly skimming the e-mails for additional information that will help me with the problem with the ILLiad user manager and looking for any information that should be sent to staff. The other e-mails, including the ten reports from those who went to the ALA, the information on endeavors in our digital libraries, and the latest issue of LJ Academic Newswire will have to wait for another time. I file these e-mails for later reading. It is noon now and I need a break. (It’s Thursday so I’m off for rousing hands of Pinochle with other card playing enthusiasts throughout the library; no score keeping so the stress levels stay low.)

Back from lunch and tired of e-mail, I decide to try and get something from my carefully planned list done. I review the Quick Reference Guide given to me last week for comment by one of the Reference Librarians, but soon discover I would like to make more than just cosmetic changes

so I create a draft to discuss with ILL staff and my supervisor. I review a draft for standardized e-mails to be used for notifying patrons of the outcome of their ILL loan renewals. I get interrupted because the Summit computer’s keyboard is not working; I call support and ask them to fix it—only to find out that others are having this problem and it can’t be fixed until the new computers arrive later this summer. The good news is there is a work-around, so I delegate learning of that work-around to the staff member using the computer most; then back to my desk. There are those pesky e-mail reminders again; I make a mental note to be more realistic in my estimates on follow-up times. I notice more e-mail has arrived and quickly read/delete/reply to as many as possible until the fifteen minute meeting reminder activates.

It’s meeting time, so I’d better print the agenda and read any supporting documents so I don’t seem too scattered in the discussions. Which meeting is it today? Could it be one of the weekly meetings like the Access Managers’ meeting, the progress report to the Head of Access, or the Public Services supervisors’ meeting/coffee time? Or is it one of the monthly meetings like the Access Department meeting, the ILL meeting, the Library Social Committee, or the Communication Task Force? Hooray, it’s a panel discussion on women in Tunisia, so I rush to the learning experience, a little stressed about what isn’t done in ILL. However, I’m quickly distracted because the panel is really interesting; I’m amazed at the parallels between the experiences of women in Tunisia and the US.

Once I return to my office, I realize I forgot to check in with staff who were doing RAPID lending for the first time today, but quickly remember that I have the best staff ever, who handled the change flawlessly. I look at e-mails now flashing at me again on the screen, pick items with real deadlines, and leave the others for another day. I add new items to my list including *See A Day in the Life* page 24



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

by Sherry Buchanan
Portland State University



*If I have seen further it is by
standing on the shoulders of giants.*

—Isaac Newton

My colleague Bill Kelm asked me to write a short piece describing a day in the life, demonstrating how I go above and beyond the duties assigned to me as the Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Specialist for Portland State University. I was honored and humbled. I spent a lot of time thinking about how I could address the assignment. Should I actually give a snapshot of one day? Should I describe in detail those things that might distinguish me from other paraprofessionals? One evening, I found myself in Jimmy Mak's, a jazz club in Portland's Pearl District with especially good Saganaki, making a list of activities that separated me from my support staff counterparts.

I wrote down that I serve as Chair of the Northwest Interlibrary Loan and Resource Sharing Conference, having been a founding member, as well as the Program Coordinator for two years. I listed the Scholarship of Teaching Resource Team grant that my team had received, an award to support a project examining student research methodologies. I listed an article written with two colleagues

about how cooperative service can resolve the challenges of grey literature requests. I listed the scholarships I was recently awarded, the Helen Benning Regnier Scholarship and the Tom and Roberta Drewes Scholarship.

I thought about my successes, and what made those successes possible. One might attribute publications and awards to good luck, and certainly there is some amount of luck inherent in meeting like-minded individuals with whom you can collaborate and especially in "winning" money, but behind these opportunities and gifts is philanthropy, the desire to help others, and a belief that individuals can make the world a better place. I am personally driven by altruism, as were my colleagues and the philanthropists who created those awards.

Beyond collaborative communication, I have been involved in task forces, initiatives, software enhancements and customizations, and movements to increase accessibility. In considering my contributions to librarianship, I recognize that I am privileged to have worked with like-minded individuals, and I realize something that I have known all along: collaboration is the only way that great discoveries are made, hence the title of this article, "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants." Isaac Newton, who gave us theories of gravity, motion and calculus, wrote in a letter to a colleague, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." If I have been a success, it can be attributed to the support of my colleagues: Bill Kelm, Cyril Oberlander, Rose Jackson, Jennifer Dorner, Bob Schroeder, the Regnier and Drewes families, and so many others whose actions have been driven not by financial or self-centered motives, but by the conviction to serve others and see an improved world.

The basis of my interest in librarianship is philanthropy, volunteerism, an eagerness for positive change and a desire to leave this planet better than I found it. With an iron will to collaborate rather than compete, I find myself unable to refuse opportunities




to foster democratic, universal access to information. A good friend and colleague refers to the urge to volunteer (yes, of course I will copy edit your paper) as “helium hand,” but the drive to successfully work with others is stronger than the elements—it is a spirit of service. More than a sense of altruism or obligation, it is a desire to see others grow and watch the energy of open minds ripple across a luminescent ocean of change. It is an immersion into life, interconnectedness, the sense that we’re all working toward the same outcomes. It is with fervor and fuel that I approach writing topics, interactions with others and the intricacies of life. Each of us has been afforded an opportunity to embrace change or resent it. Why not volunteer? Why not engage in a good challenge? It is this attitude that distinguishes a professional from a paraprofessional, no matter what your official status.

If you are a support staff person in a library, you can make a difference too. If you have within you a desire for democratic, universal access to information, or a drive to discover meaning by recognizing the signs around us, then open your mind, and know that you can become a new person every day. Hate to be bored. Have a helium hand. Adapt early. Do not focus on the differences between you and others, but instead, grasp the hands of your colleagues and communicate to the best of your abilities to ensure that philanthropy and universal access remain the guiding principles of librarianship. You, your library, and larger systems will benefit from your good ethics and good will.

If you are an administrator overseeing support staff, consider how you might collaborate with or foster collaboration amongst your staff, and be sure to give your employees room to grow!

About the Author

Sherry Buchanan, Creative Writing M.F.A., is the Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Specialist at Portland State University, supervising six student staff

and managing the workflow of an Interlibrary Loan operation that fills over 21,000 requests per year. She has over seven years of experience within three academic libraries, including Portland State University, Willamette University and Oregon State University. Sherry is the Chair of the Northwest Interlibrary Loan and Resource Sharing Conference, having been a founding member of the conference, and served as the conference’s Program Coordinator for two years. Sherry is pursuing a Master of Science in Library and Information Science and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Digital Libraries and expects to graduate in December 2006. Her research interests include cooperative service, grey literature, research methodologies, open access and universal access. Feel free to contact her at: sherrybuchanan@gmail.com 

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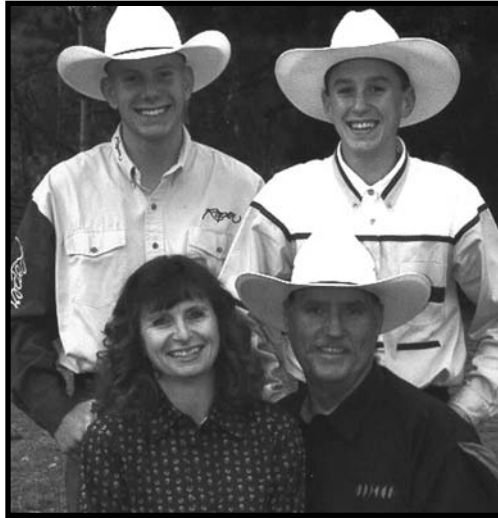
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A Day in My Life

by *Deniece Davis*
Oregon Institute of Technology



The days in my life are never mundane or the same. My personal life and work life are intertwined and the seasons drastically influence my days. Fall season consists of haying; bringing our cattle home for the winter; the start of fall term at work; and also school and football for our younger boy, Andy. Winter brings on one of my family's busiest seasons because of calving; things always pick up winter term at work; and there is school and basketball for Andy. Spring brings around the beginning of the cycle of seasons with a herd of new baby calves: having to check fences before turning out our herd of cows, calves and bulls; planting crops; branding and vaccinating the herd; and track for Andy. Summer season brings on irrigating the crops; haying our crops; summer break for Andy, which means traveling to take him to a variety of sports camps; and it's also the end and beginning of a fiscal year at work. Most days I think my name should be Jack as in "Jack of all trades," instead of Deniece.

My husband Mike and I own a cattle/hay ranch which his grandfather started homesteading around 1907. The family ranch is 933 acres and is located approximately 27 miles east of Klamath Falls, in the Bonanza area. It is nestled along the

eastern side of the Swan Lake Rim and on the edge of Yonna Valley, which is known for its farming land and good irrigation wells, with lots of water. Our two boys, Billy, who is 21 and Andy, who is 16, are the fourth generation to live and work on this land. The ranch still doesn't have any electricity or telephone access. Our house is located about a mile below the ranch, and we do have these luxuries.

Besides being a mother, wife, and rancher, I am also a Library Technician III at Oregon Institute of Technology Library, with the job title of Acquisitions/Documents Manager. I started working at OIT the summer of 1998. My job title covers a variety of duties and several others which fall under that job description line of "all other duties as assigned." Some of the "other duties" I am responsible for are helping with metadata processing for our Klamath Waters Digital Library (KWDL); lots of copy cataloging for books, federal and state documents, and the special collection of the Shaw Historical Library; taking care of all the Library's mending; working with the Library's High School Outreach program; and any crisis that needs immediate attention in the Technical Service Department.

The KWDL (<http://klamathwaterlib.oit.edu/>) is in its second year of funding from a LSTA grant. I helped write the initial grant and now assist with creating metadata for the documents added to the digital library. I also work on finding fugitive items to add to the collection. While working on obtaining information for the KWDL I have had to maintain a professional level of objectivity which has helped me personally and professionally.

The OIT and Shaw Libraries are partners on this project. Water use in the Klamath Basin is a highly controversial issue. Information on the water issues in the Klamath River Basin is scattered among government agencies, interest groups, libraries, museums, research institutions and



other sources, and many of the publications are very difficult to find. As a result, users often are not aware of all the possible sources available to them and end up with an incomplete view of the issues. If a solution to managing this limited natural resource is to be found, accurate information is critical.

Everyone involved in the digital library truly believes in access to information without taking an advocacy view-point. As a rancher and farmer, these issues are real for me and my family—we live them every day. That is why I feel this project is one of many steps which can contribute to reaching a common goal of understanding and teamwork by everyone who is involved in trying to resolve these complex issues.


I am a member of the Cloverleaf Watershed Working Group, which works to promote, educate and assist in water restoration projects in the Bonanza community. I also represent the Bonanza area on the Klamath Watershed Council (KWC), and am on its executive committee. Klamath Watershed Council is made up of representatives from each of the watershed working groups in Klamath County. The KWC works on watershed issues and does a fantastic job of pulling together members from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The Watershed Council was looking for a way to demonstrate the progress all of the working groups had made with watershed enhancement projects by showing before and after photographs of enhanced areas. I thought this was a great way to connect my work on the KWDL and the members of the KWC. Now the digital library has a special section showing watershed enhancement progress that the KWC has made throughout the Klamath Basin. Being able to combine my personal and work knowledge and experiences is a wonderful opportunity.

Promoting and developing partnerships with the local junior and senior high schools is another area of interest to me,

and again I am lucky to have the opportunity to combine them. Most of the public schools in the Klamath Basin don't have full-time media specialists, but some have part-time media specialists. As a parent, and past public school employee, I see how the lack of media specialists in the school libraries affects students, especially now, since I work at the higher education level. Before working for OIT Library I worked for the Klamath County School District for over seventeen years, and my last four years were spent managing a library for a K–12 school.

Here at the OIT Library, we offer high school students several services to assist them with research, and their education. The days when the local high school senior classes visit us for help are some of my favorite days at work. Partnerships between junior and senior high schools and higher education are a win-win situation for everyone involved.

As you can see, there is never a dull moment or day in my life. I probably have an odd mixture of personal experiences, knowledge, and job duties. I think it is great to be able to combine them all. I wear lots of different hats, and sometimes feel like the “Mad Hatter,” but I wouldn't want to work anywhere else. I feel OIT Library is one of the best places I have ever worked. 

About the Author

Deniece Davis, sports mom, rancher and cattlegirl, is the Acquisitions Documents Manager at the Oregon Institute of Technology Library. In her busy life Deniece has served as an Educational Assistant (1980–94) and media Specialist Assistant (1994–97) with Bonanza Schools K–12; as the Executive Council Secretary for the Klamath Watershed Council (2005) and on the Klamath County Library Advisory Council (2003–05).



A Day in the Life... Keeping it Light in the Library

by Pam North
Sherwood Public Library



Libraries are filled with rules and regulations—tedious policies, procedures, “proper behaviors” and all the rest of the faldral that suggests those bun-wearing, pursed-lipped, shushing librarians of long-ago. The old perceptions can easily mislead us into thinking work in libraries is monotonous and dull. And certainly, dealing with the public, with students, with administration—*can* be trying. Added to that are the pressures of “doing more with less”—less space, fewer staff, and shrinking budgets. All of these circumstances can certainly add up to a diminished possibility of joy in our day.

But don't be fooled! We are surrounded by a wealth of opportunities to add fun to our workday. Our co-workers, patrons, materials, processes and surroundings can all offer pleasant escapes from the routine. Fun and frivolity are within easy reach and are recommended for a thriving staff and work environment. Keeping ourselves open to finding the fun is the key.

Now I know not everyone is going to buy into this “fun is good” in the workplace line of thinking. I can already see the naysayers running to their spreadsheets and calculators to determine how much productivity is wasted with the addition of joy. But STOP, I say! A happy staff is a productive staff—let the joy run rampant!

We, the Library Staff

First, it is up to us to bring fun to the library. We are fortunate to work in a profession where there is a great passion for what we do. This “library passion” does not always include the concept of fun, but to flourish, our passion needs to be tempered by the belief that there can be delight in what we do.

Without even thinking about it we do things daily that make the workplace fun. How about the food? Show me a library that doesn't have some snack or tidbit in the break room or on the back counter! Someone is always bringing in something from the garden, something found at the store that looks new and yummy. At the moment we are dishing up a wide variety: cherry tomatoes, a giant chocolate bar, cucumbers, a bag of trail mix, grapes, fried cheese curds (gasp!) and two bags of Pepperidge Farm Goldfish.

Some days we declare the next day dedicated to a specific color and, if we remember, all try to wear something with that color in it. Easy? Sure! Fun? Yes!

Take the time to share what's funny. I had a vendor call not long ago who prefaced her sales talk with “I am so sorry but I've got a whole lot of donut in my mouth.”

Library staff are inclined to be folks who practice mutual respect and open communication, but are sometimes of a reserved nature. We need to recognize that we are individuals away from the library; by sharing the interests and talents we enjoy outside of the workplace we form deeper and more meaningful relationships with our coworkers. We can also learn what each of us enjoys, what makes us laugh, what makes us feel a part of the whole. The simple act of getting to know one another allows us to have more fun as we go about our day.

Them, the Patrons

Yes, the patrons—be they from the general, academic, corporate, medical or whichever public. We are here to support them and



there is no reason they can't help provide light moments and laughter (either intentional or unintentional) in our day.

We all have our "regulars." The patrons we know and love (or love to...) and their daily visits often brighten our days or provide us with material for chuckles in the back room. Yesterday we had a young lad come up to the counter and say, "I'm sorry but this book has expired" in hopes we would understand it was overdue.

Patrons of near-legendary status here at Sherwood include a gentleman who, during the holidays, elaborately re-crafts traditional Christmas carols to include staff names and anecdotes and then performs the ditties at our annual holiday party. This past season he tried a new genre, reworking Dr. Seuss. One verse read:

"No, shouted Mary, with a shouty-shout, shout,

Hal-in-the-Hat you must get outy-out-OUT!"

He also brings homemade penuche fudge, which always improves our spirits.

We once had a family of four children who would careen with delight to the picture books to find their favorite. I can't believe I can't recall the title but it was a big book filled with tiny, cartoonish renderings of hundreds, no thousands, of children and on one page there was one tiny boy sans pants (anatomically correct) at a swimming pool—they would howl each and every time they found it as if they had never seen it before.

We have been known to abbreviate patron attributes to "protect the innocent," as it were.

HMP is a "high maintenance patron" and often we are the victims of the TMI, "too much information."

Something we've started to do is keep a journal of patron quotes that strike us as funny or unbelievable. A few from our pages:

"Do any animals die in this movie?" as the woman was holding up "Old Yeller."

"Is that a full-time job?" Asked of the director's position, followed by, "It is so

nice of you ladies to volunteer" referring to the rest of the staff.

And an all-time favorite, "Can you heat my sandwich?" When the staff member politely responded in the negative the patron rejoined, "You didn't look like the kind of person who would."

Stuff and Nonsense

Libraries are filled with stuff—oftentimes too much. We tend to hold on to everything, "just in case." Yet every day materials pass through our doors filled (literally) with keepsakes that can bring a chuckle. We decided to make a record of the items we have found in returned materials, primarily books.

Photographs, membership cards, a French fry, handmade bookmarks, notes that no one's eyes were ever supposed to see, recipes, candy wrappers, drawings, lists, pasta, a small furry pelt... They have all dropped from the pages of books and into our keepsake journal.

Every day we repeat tasks done the day before—checking items out, checking items in, filling hold requests, covering books, answering reference questions, answering the phone... and the list goes on and on! Well, don't decry the drudgery—find the fun in it.

Change your perspective and as you check in the holds, guess who they might be for or speculate on how or why the patron might be using the information.

Have fun with weeding—those old, torn "Where's Waldo?" books—don't just discard them, find the Waldos and circle them with an El Marko! Haven't you always wanted to do that? OK, now discard the book.

Finding the Fun

As Mary Poppins sang, "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun and - SNAP - the job's a game." So add your own spoon full of sugar to bring laughter to your library and keep things light.



A Day in the Life


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an employee evaluation, my self evaluation, and a reminder to send out an agenda for the ILL meeting. I go to shut down my computer and realize I never finished reviewing the e-mails for our courtesy renewal messages, which will have to wait for another day.

As I reflect on the day, I think about how exciting it is to work on a vibrant, thriving campus. I consider how fortunate I am to have such competent colleagues in the faculty and staff at OSU and around the state. I think about the challenges ahead and am thankful that my work is never boring.

Mostly, I think about what should be on my list for the next day and remember the old adage—time flies when you're having fun.


About the Author

Lisa Conaster is currently the Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery Supervisor at Oregon State University Valley Library. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. She has served libraries in Oregon, Florida, and Arkansas, and asserts that few endeavors are more rewarding than a day in the life at the library. 

Accidental Library Tourist

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me, too. I saw books the likes of which I'd never seen. We had flat picture books with spines frayed backwards like a crooked finger, embrittled law tomes that had burst their bindings, atlases the size of end tables, and innumerable copies of the first volume of Harry Potter, each one split open exactly between pages 42 and 43. Collective agreement would encircle the room about wear and tear on middle-school textbooks, paperback mystery novels and baby books printed on stiff cardboard pages, while I strove to keep up and think fast, applying what had worked for me for years on university hardcovers. Our worktables filled up with books, rolls of cloth, and scrap paper as we began cutting and gluing, and for the first time since working the Circulation desk at the Woodstock branch I tasted the hectic pace that is business as usual for many library staff. Every class was my continuing education on the library's role as a community hub—and how to set up what one woman called a “M*A*S*H unit” for books within a usually crowded and very active multi-use work area.

It's been five-and-a-half years since Kris and I first presented on book repair and collection maintenance at the 2000 OLA conference. Since then we've taught five or six full-day classes each year, April through October, without yet putting the caravan up on blocks. The way the word has spread is a wonderful thing, as experience has convinced me we're offering reliable do-it-yourself remedies—not snake oil! I never knew I had any wanderlust, but now I can't imagine a summer spent entirely at one workbench, without a day on the road. 

About the Author

Carolee Harrison has spent the past seven years mending thousands of volumes in the Portland State University Library's circulating collection. She found herself on the workshop circuit quite by accident after confessing her fantasy of becoming the Iron Chef of books. Since the turn of the century, Carolee and Kris Kern, PSU's preservation librarian, have toured Oregon each spring and summer teaching book repair and conservation to library staff and volunteers.

