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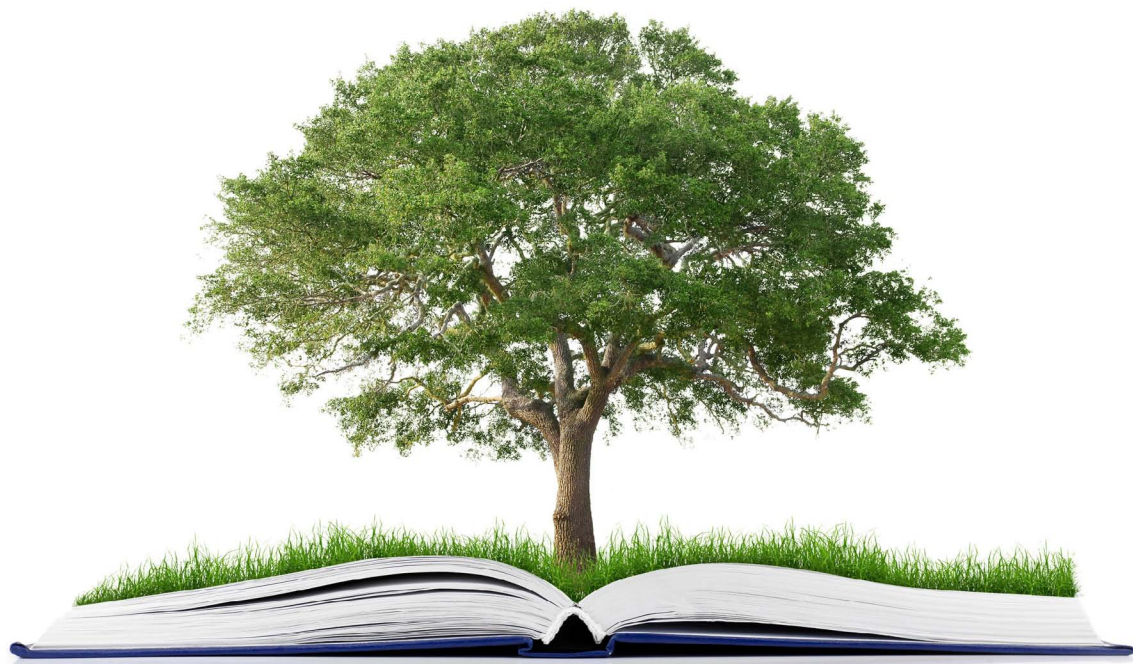
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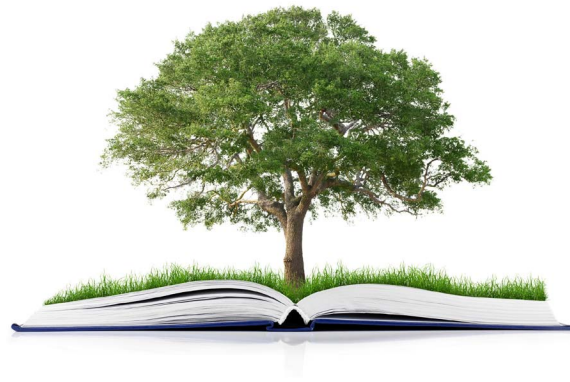
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Growth

**Upcoming
Issue**

Summer 2015

*Oregon Libraries:
Ideas at Work*

Introduction

As an amateur home gardener, spring makes me think of trees budding, bulbs sprouting, and a bright new shade of green on the tips of the conifers surrounding our beautiful, rugged landscape here in Central Oregon. How fitting then, to make the theme of our spring issue a one-word summary of the season: growth.

This issue looks at growth from many perspectives and at many different levels. Melissa Little tackles growth from a personal, individual perspective with a focus on how managers can better support the professional development of their employees. Charles Wood expands the notion of development to a public library in his profile of Aloha Community Library, one of Oregon's newest additions to the library landscape. Lindsay Slater turns her lens on growth toward young students and the promotion of summer reading programs. Finally, our incoming OLA president, Jane Corry, brings it all back around with an engaging piece on how specific OLA members—including yours truly—have grown through involvement with our local library association.

This issue's theme resonates for me personally as my own little institution stands on the brink of enormous growth. The Cascades campus of Oregon State University will transform over the summer from a two-year branch to a four-year university. The site of our future buildings is currently sand, rock, juniper and pine trees. Over the next couple decades, we will become Oregon's newest university location in Bend with hopefully, possibly—a library of our own one day. How much of that will be physical? How much will be digital? The answers remain to be seen.

Just as spring is a transitional season, balanced between the chill of winter and the warmth of summer, so is growth a transition by its very definition. In order to recognize growth, we have to know where we are coming from and be aware of changes as they are happening. The most amazing thing about growth is the inherent potential. What will the seed become? What fruit will this new sprout produce? Looking at today's growth can give us some clues about what to expect in the near future. I invite you to join me in exploring the various facets of growth presented by our authors in the following pages and enjoy the new beginnings offered by this wonderful season. Happy Spring!

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OLAQ

Continual Growth:

Environmental Enrichment and Encouraged Engagement



by **Melissa Little**
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Many animal activists feel that zoos stifle beasts' natural instincts and limit animals in harmful ways. Frustration and depression among the occupants ensues. Modern zoos have come up with methods, called environmental enrichments, to provide the occupants with surroundings that keep them engaged—new sights, sounds, aromas, tactile experiences. These might include obstacles or to get at preferred foods. Moving puzzles from place to place within their environment keeps them stimulated. Simple things changed in their environment allow them to exercise control or choice, provide challenges, and keep things interesting, ultimately enhancing their well-being.

While the people we supervise in libraries have considerably more freewill than animals in a zoo, sometimes the jobs we do can become repetitive and mundane and those performing them can feel nearly as stifled as a tiger in a cage. As libraries work to enrich the lives of our community by providing opportunities for lifelong learning, we should also be creating what Peter Senge referred to as the “learning organization.” Senge defined these as:

... organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (Senge, 1994)

Creating learning organizations can be difficult. Often employees are so focused on the day-to-day of their job that they find it difficult to look beyond their core responsibilities. For many, the repetitiveness and lack of challenge might be something they say they like about the job. Still others with no ambitions of advancement see no reason to push themselves outside their comfort zones. Consequently, supervisors need to create environments that stimulate growth for individuals and the organization.

The first step in helping individuals in your organization to grow is to understand their interests and help them identify what opportunities exist. For many employees, keeping up with things that fall out of the scope of the typical responsibilities can be challenging. Creating development plans with each of your staff can help you to know your employees better and put you in a position to better understand and take note of what motivates and excites them about their job or the work of the library. Often these types of conversations only occur when the employee expresses interest in moving up or the supervisor identifies them as a mover and shaker. Consequently, those people who have no interest in promotion often fall between the cracks. Supervisors should make developmental plans with each direct report.

These plans need not be formal documents. The city of Beaverton, OR uses a tool called Performance, Planning, Dialogue, & Development (PPDD) instead of a formal performance review. While this system does have its flaws, the focus on informal conversations allows opportunity to learn about employees on a more personal level. This knowledge can assist you in pointing staff toward enrichment opportunities. Through these discussions I have learned about the lives of my employees outside of the library. This knowledge has helped me to better understand what types of trainings and job assignments will be of interest to them. When I learn about events happening outside our division that would



be a good fit, I personally let them know and make the connection for them with the staff person in charge of that program or service. Too often we send out e-mails or put up signs asking for volunteers for special assignments and then are discouraged when no one does so. The reality is that many people underestimate their skills and do not offer assistance for that reason. Asking directly eliminates these assumptions and inspires confidence and trust with the employee. It also eliminates the assumption that the offer is just being made for specific job classifications.

Adherence to job classification often stifles our ability to create a learning organization. We sometimes assume that as supervisors we cannot ask someone to do something outside his job description. However, these assignments often give fulfillment to the employee, something better than financial reward for most of us. For example, in my last position, I supervised shelvers and clerks (as I do now). One shelver, Dustin, had an idea for creating a display area for adult graphic novels. Rather than pass this information along to the Adult Services division, I asked that manager if Dustin could create and maintain this display. He worked with the librarian who oversaw that collection, Louise, to find a space. When some teens expressed interest in creating an anime club to Louise, rather than turning them down because there was insignificant staff budgeted to oversee it, Louise immediately thought of Dustin and we coordinated his schedule so that he could be available a few hours a month to prepare and facilitate the club. In most organizations, even those where unions represent a large percentage of the staff, contracts typically allow for a small percentage of time to be spent on duties outside job description in order to allow for development of staff and succession planning.

Sometimes these growth opportunities can be created through new programs such as the above example, or sometimes it can happen due to the necessity of a current program outgrowing the staff available. At Beaverton City Library, we receive a great deal of assistance from volunteers. Each division of the library has a volunteer partner. Circulation and the Branch have two. Previously all training of new volunteers was done by the Volunteer Partners—in both divisions, the Leads fill this role. However, in Circulation, once the volunteer is trained they work most closely with the Library Aide 1 (shelvers). The Leads have taken on more duties around library account problems and training of staff for their own growth. Additionally, they work the desk for half of their shifts. It was becoming increasingly more difficult to coordinate times for new volunteers to be trained. Out of necessity, we talked to the Library Aide 1s about becoming the primary trainers for volunteers in our division. While we did offer it to all, we specifically asked individuals who we had observed as being receptive to volunteer questions and generally more willing to correct mistakes as they saw them. We have done several Train the Trainer sessions so that the employees felt prepared to take on this new responsibility.

When you have employees who are thirsty for a new experience, providing these types of opportunities might be all you need to do. But what about those employees who state they have no desire to take on new responsibilities or to grow? It seems in every organization you have the people who volunteer for every new duty and those folks who are content to do their job, do it well, and go home at the end of the day. They work to live rather than live to work. And what is wrong with that? Absolutely nothing—as long as employees



desire to have no changes in their role does not impede the organizations ability to grow. However, as the role of the library changes from repository of books to center for community lifelong learning, the duties of librarians have consequently evolved. In the current culture of libraries, people refusing to change can hinder our ability to provide the services that our community needs.

Again, supervisors have a responsibility to create environments where growth and a learning culture are encouraged. Development plans should focus on employee interests, but they should also focus on organizational needs. Those organizational needs have to outweigh the desires of staff. If the use of certain services has diminished, that service cannot be maintained simply because you have employees who like providing it. This situation has arisen in libraries where the need to have staff sitting at a desk providing reference service has declined. As many libraries have found, staying relevant to your community means getting out into your community. But for those employees that excel at providing reference service, it can be scary to contemplate a future where something in which you excel has been deemed no longer a core function of your job. In order to help staff make this transition more smoothly, training should be provided to help where gaps exist between organizational needs and organizational knowledge.

Creating a learning organization starts from the top down. Managers at every level have to make training part of each person's development plan. What skills does that great reference librarian need to make him or her more comfortable providing outreach? Has the organization failed to provide much needed computer trainings because no one feels competent to do the teaching? Training can be found for free or minimal cost through many on-line sources now. At Beaverton City Library we have created a Training Committee. One of the main functions of the committee will be to identify trainings offered free or at a minimal cost which will enrich the employees of the organization. These trainings will be available to all staff regardless of role. A few resources which provide great training opportunities for staff are:

<http://nwcentral.org/>


<http://www.ala.org/lita/learning/online>

<http://infopeople.org/>

Research reinforces the need to provide growth opportunities for staff. In the book *12: The elements of great managing*, Rodd Wagner & James Harter, PH.D identified factors employees across organizations gave as important to their engagement with their job. Their findings showed that opportunities to learn and grow ranked highly as a reason why people remain with an employer and stay engaged with their jobs (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Understanding how to keep employees engaged and happy directly relates to the success of a company's mission (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Supervisors will be more successful in their missions by developing a learning environment where employee satisfaction and engagement are key goals of the organization. Wagner and Harter also found in their research that "a connection with the mission of the company" led to a higher level of engagement. (Wagner & Harter, 2006) As staff take on new roles and challenges, they can be reminded



of the true mission of the library and be better able to “see the whole together” as Senge calls it.

Just like lions, tigers, and bears, humans can become frustrated and depressed by a work environment that stifles their natural instinct to grow. As supervisors we can bring environmental enrichment to our staffs’ work life. By providing new work experiences, trainings, and opportunities to bring personal interests to work, we help keep an engaged and engaging group of people providing services to their community. 

Resources

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Wagner, R.& Harter, J. (2006). *12: The elements of great managing*. New York, NY: Gallup Press.



Start-up Library:

A Report from the Aloha Community Library



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Drexel University, MSLIS 2010

Introduction

“Do you have any idea of what is going on in Aloha?” is how Oregon State Librarian MaryKay Dahlgreen began her speech at the Grand Opening of the Aloha Community Library on September 22, 2012 (Squires, Oct. 4, 2012). The people of Aloha, Oregon have united in an incredibly determined effort to create a library that will serve as a learning resource and gathering space for their growing community, which is nestled in the heart of the Silicon Forest (Wollner, 2015). This article looks at how the Aloha Community Library came to be, exploring its past and present, as well as future plans for growth.

Volunteers

A few talented and entrepreneurial people hatched the idea to open a new library over coffee in January 2011 (Squires, 2012). They used their communication and organizational skills to attract hundreds of volunteers who donated their time and expertise to this unique project. Currently there are about fifty volunteers who contribute their time on a monthly basis, with only two paid staff to help train and manage them. Since the grand opening on September 22, 2012, volunteers have documented over 17,000 hours (Palmer, 2015). This does not include hours from 2011 until opening, or the majority of hours put in by board members, who become so wrapped up in their work that they forget to record their time. It is not possible to mention them all by name, but volunteers are responsible for the creation and operation of this new community library.

Thousands of hours were dedicated to processing books to fill the shelves. A voluminous amount of donated books needed to be sorted to determine whether they would be part of the new collection, sold in a community book sale, or donated to other local charities. Each book in the new collection required cleaning, cataloging, and processing. Many people dedicated their entire summer to make sure the library would be ready to open on time. New friendships were made and volunteers found a sense of purpose working on a project solely dedicated to helping people.

This project attracted people with life experience in education, business and organizational management. These people volunteered to work on the Board of Directors and the Development Committee. They were responsible for obtaining the library’s tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status, planning for the future and fundraising. They have managed matching grant fundraising campaigns, an Amazon.com storefront for online book sales, and fundraising events such as a lovely morning brunch which featured acclaimed Oregonian columnist, Steve Duin. Their amazing efforts have managed to raise enough money to support an annual operating budget of \$100,000 (Palmer, 2015).

Before the library opened, volunteer Library Assistants were recruited and trained to manage the circulation desk, provide ready reference services, and help with the day to day operations of the library. They were trained in the best practices of customer service, signing people up for library cards, checking out books with the LibraryWorld database, and on measures to keep the library a safe place for patrons and staff. In March 2015, they checked out 3,222 items (Palmer, 2015). Their dedication allows the library to be open 37 hours a week. Library Assistants are the public face of the library, and are a major reason patrons keep coming back. They are appreciated beyond measure.

Another remarkable aspect of this new library is the extensive amount of fascinating programs available on a regular basis. Many of these programs are provided for free by peo-



ple in the community with a unique skill or talent that they want to share. The Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District's Nature Mobile stops by once in a while to teach children about local wildlife. The recurring "Read to the Dogs" program helps young people gain confidence with their reading skills, and helps dogs hear more stories. Volunteer Tech Tutors are available twice a week to help people learn computer skills. Annually, the "Holiday Book-tique" fundraising sale offers unique handmade art, jewelry and crafts generously donated by local artisans. There are two different story-time programs for different age groups and a book club will be starting on May 4th, 2015. One popular program is the "Teen Takeover Night," where sixth to twelfth graders gather for food and fun after the library is closed to the public. One of these events was called "Silence in the Library," a Doctor Who fan night with pizza, costumes and games. Another night was dedicated to the "Science of Special Effects" with a zombie makeover demonstration by Ravenous Studios, who have worked on television shows such as Grimm and Portlandia. For seniors and their families, there was a presentation about the "Villages Without Walls" community in Washington County, where seniors can "age in place" in their own homes with a support network of local volunteers. Crafting aficionados learned how to make "Book Art Flowers," and were able to contribute to the Ezra Jack Keats Community Collage Project. There have been programs donated by local authors, gardeners, aviation enthusiasts, animal shelter experts, and astronomers. There was even a "Dancing in the Stacks" program where professional dancers demonstrated and gave lessons in ballroom dancing. It has been like a childhood fable; where the community comes together to magically lift the spirit of the town ... except it's in real life!



Support From Local Libraries, Government, Schools, Businesses and Community Organizations

As the word got out about what was happening in Aloha, support from local organizations and businesses started pouring in. Donations of bookshelves and furniture, computers and technical support, painting supplies and labor, and architectural design were all found quickly by the outreach efforts of the Board of Directors. Notably, the Beaverton Optimist Club and Jack Franklin designed some wonderful bulletin boards that remind one of summer camp. Betsy Buckel designed the lovely “Book Art Flowers” that now adorn the library’s walls. The community has come together to build a beautiful library.

Since many of its patrons are school-aged, the Aloha Community Library has partnered with the Beaverton School District in the past, and looks to build on this relationship in the future. From the library’s earliest days, support from the Washington County Commissioners has been strong. One of the library’s biggest supporters with technical advice, library materials, and moral support has been Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS). They set benchmarks that need to be reached before the library can join the cooperative, but they have also done what they can to help achieve those goals. One significant example is the provision of WCCLS barcode stickers so that a possible ILS migration from the current LibraryWorld catalog to WCCLS’s Polaris will be easier. They have even let the library participate in WCCLS’s annual Storytelling Festival by donating programs like “Art of the Story,” in which storyteller Chetter Galloway will share African and African American tales on April 18th, 2015.

WCCLS has designated Cedar Mill Public Library as Aloha’s mentor library, with Executive Director Peter Leonard providing answers to questions and solutions to issues as they arise (Squires, 2014). Cedar Mill is also a non-profit library, which began forty years ago in a similar manner to how the Aloha Community Library is developing now. Using Cedar Mill as a model, the Aloha Community Library hopes to continue to build and sustain community support over the years (Palmer, 2015).


Future Plans

WCCLS Director Eva Calcagno said that “this library cannot be sustained by donations and grants alone. A fully functioning public library serving a community of this size requires government support to assure free, open, and reliable access for the residents.” (Squires, 2014). To this end, WCCLS has included plans for the Aloha Community Library to join the cooperative in the Library Levy on the November 2015 ballot (Mistreanu, 2014). If the levy passes, the library will be on track to join WCCLS by July 2016 (Palmer, 2015). At that point the library will receive county funding and patrons will be able to access materials from all 15 libraries currently in the system. According to Terri Palmer, Director of the Aloha Community Library, this will likely cause circulation statistics to increase rapidly, making the library as busy as many of the other libraries in the system (Apalategui, March 3, 2015).

Conclusion

State Librarian MaryKay Dahlgreen asked the people who gathered for the 2012 Grand Opening, if they had heard people say that we do not need libraries anymore. She then said “You, people, are my prime example when people say that to me. I say ‘Do you know what



they are doing in Aloha? Do you have any idea what they are doing in Aloha!?!’ ... Thank you so much for giving me the story. Because, by golly, I will use it for those people who say libraries are dying” (Squires, 2012). The Aloha Community Library would like to thank everyone who has helped build this new library, and are looking forward to meeting those who want to work with us in the future. 

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Advertising a Summer Reading Program to Elementary Students



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Summer of 2012, I was a Summer Reading Program (SRP) intern at the Beaverton City Library (BCL). At the start of the internship, I accompanied librarians on school visits about summer reading. We presented a skit that included students and promoted “Dream Big, Read.”

Last summer, I joined in the fun of “Fizz, Boom, Read.” Though I didn’t go on school visits, my coworker’s test runs of the baking soda and vinegar “explosion” delighted me. That year BCL’s skit featured mad scientists portrayed by a pair of library staff members and two students volunteers.

In the skit, students wander into a “lab” and Dr. Fizz and Dr. Frizzle create a baking soda and vinegar explosion. The cast then shares a conversation about the SRP. Dr. Fizz encourages everyone to “visit the Beaverton City Library or our website ... to pick up your reading log.” The scientists tout fun science activities, prizes for registration and completion, and the opportunity to check out books and media.

BCL also provided materials for parents and guardians. Adults received a flier that students took home. The flier included the dates of the SRP, number of reading hours required, and types of prizes for finishers. The hand out also contained a calendar of free, library events for children.

I started to wonder—skits are so fun for us library employees, but when do they work best for kids? I began to answer that question when I took the class “Persuasion” from Dr. Alan Mikkelson at Whitworth University. In studying a skit as a persuasive attempt, I identified three important features of skits and handouts and one new idea for take home materials.

1) The skit is all about the kids

Our skits will do best when we include peers. BCL does so through two characters. BCL asks school staff to recruit two student volunteers ahead of the performance. The students get to run through the lines and hold scripts. Participating is not supposed to be scary! Students even use their real names. By including students, the discussion about SRP is more natural and persuasive:

Dora: I love reading—I want to join! Right now, I’m reading a nonfiction book about the planets. Can we read nonfiction?

Dr. Fizz: Sure, you can read all kinds of books—books about space, animals, poetry, scary stories, just about anything you want!

Alan: Can we join right now?

We know including children makes a difference for two reasons. First, we are more likely to follow through on our attitudes when we perceive social support (Ajzen, 1991). Since the student actors each say “I want to join,” the audience sees that their peers encourage participation in summer reading. Second, kids like the skit more for including peers. Advertisements are more appealing to kids when they are “child relevant.” (Hota et al., 2010). When students see their peers on stage they are more likely to think “this skit is for children like me”—the very definition of child relevance according to Hota et al. (2010). And child relevance makes a difference because kids’ attitudes about an advertisement are linked to their attitudes about what is being promoted (Hota et al., 2010).



2. We want kids to “think I can!”

When a strong skit finishes, the students are clear on how to sign up. BCL helps kids understand the registration process:

Dr. Fizz: The Summer Reading Program begins Sunday, June 1st. Just visit the Beaverton City Library or our website between June 1st and July 21st to pick up your reading log, get your Thorns soccer ticket, a swim pass from THPRD, and a round of golf. You have until August 13th to turn in the reading log and receive your prizes.

Setting aside the time to talk through logistics of registration when there are so many fun activities to highlight is worth it because of the concept of perceived behavioral control. Our attitudes about an activity, like registering for summer reading, are more likely to influence our behavior when we believe we can succeed (Ajzen, 1991). In our case, Dr. Fizz describes how to register and so perceived behavioral control depends on whether kids think that their parents will comply.

3. Parents (and kids) want to know “why summer reading?”

Skits should demonstrated three characteristics of SRP.

- 1) Summer reading is fun.
- 2) Summer reading is easy.
- 3) Summer reading is needed.

By covering these characteristics, we address the three concerns of parents that do not participate in SRP, according to a 1997 study by Walter and Markey.

The first concern parents have, that SRP is not enjoyable, can be addressed by helping kids get excited about SRP. BCL’s skit shows that SRP is fun by describing activities:

Alan: ... Summer vacation is great, but sometimes I get bored because there is nothing to do.

Dr. Fizz: There is a ton of things to do at the library, like you can see a puppet show and Bob the Magician! To find out about the different shows at the library this summer, be sure to take home this flyer that describes the summer reading program and has a calendar of all the great library events.

The other two concerns, that SRP takes too much time and is not needed might be better addressed in a hand out to parents. We can show that SRP is easy with an explanation that parents can register online. The simplicity of SRP can also be shown by stating the number of books or hours to be read and what counts. For example, parents that think they do not have time to read aloud might be happy to learn that that audiobooks count.

The last concern, that SRP are not needed, could be the easiest for us to forget to address. We might think it is obvious that SRP are good for kids. But, some parents said they thought their kids did not need a reading program either because they like to oversee their kids’ education, read their own books, don’t think they needed incentives, or were unaware of the program (Walter & Markey, 1997).



One option to clear up the misconception that SRP are not useful is to share facts about summer reading loss and gains from summer reading. Make sure to include the source of the information. Rational arguments are at their strongest when they are complete and information is cited (O’Keefe, 1998).


Kids would also like to hear about reading outcomes. Justice et al. (2013) found that children ages 0–17 participated in SRP to practice reading skills. When we tell kids how their reading skills can improve through summer reading we are doing what persuasion calls “explicitly stating a conclusion.” Explicitly stating a conclusion with detail increases persuasiveness (O’Keefe, 1997). Detail helps the audience imagine performing a behavior and perceive that they can accomplish a goal (O’Keefe, 1997). In other words, we can help kids imagine themselves as confident readers when we tell them about SRP outcomes.

4. How do we encourage parents and kids to talk about SRP?

Some research indicates that we should create advertisements that involve both parents and kids. Walter and Markey (1997) found that a sizable chunk of parents (21%) signed up for SRP because of a notice from their child’s school. But, school was not the only place that parents heard about SRP. The parents who went on to register their children also heard about SRP from their kids. Parents of participants tended to say they fell in the “heard it from school” camp if they also fell in the “heard it from kids” camp.

My guess is that hearing about SRP from kids makes a difference to whether parents actually register because kids are enthusiastic. When children are excited about SRP and talk about it with their parents, the discussion may alleviate their parents’ fear that SRP will not be enjoyable.

Here’s an idea for how to inspire more parents and kids to talk about SRP together. A study by Blom Hoffman, Wilcox, and Dunn (2008) investigated nutrition education for kindergarten and first graders. The nutrition program developed information into a book that parents could read with their child, activities to complete, and a requirement to read the material (77 percent did). The researchers found that the book about nutrition was an effective means of transmitting knowledge.

If any children’s program called for a book as advertising, it would be SRP. Perhaps a booklet could describe a family that participates in a summer reading program and ask families to identify literacy activities they can do together. And if you want to write that story, let me know! I would love to hear about it. 



Sources for Summer Reading Facts

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s “Why Public Summer Reading Programs are Important”

<http://pld.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/pld/pdf/slp-points.pdf>

New York State Library’s “Importance of Summer Reading”

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/research.htm>

Cooperative Summer Library Program’s “Summer Reading White Paper”

<http://tinyurl.com/qybrrcm>



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Growth through Involvement



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When I read that the Spring issue was going to be on the topic of growth, I immediately thought about how my involvement in OLA has provided an incredible growth experience for me. As I head into the years when many librarians start to feel “been there, done that,” my involvement has kept me excited about my profession and given me many opportunities for learning things that my job—although I love it—does not provide. I’ve worked up my nerve to talk to legislators about library issues. I helped rewrite bylaws and mission statements. I organized food, carpools and room assignments for a two day meeting. I’ve made mistakes and gotten advice and support about that.

Most surprisingly, I discovered that I enjoy board meetings. My friend Deeda Chamberlain used to say of her time on the OLA Board, “It’s great to be part of an organization that actually accomplishes things.” For me, it’s inspiring to sit in a room for 4 hours with smart, committed people who care passionately about the same things I care about— working to make things better for all librarians, library users, and people who should be library users. I also loved Children’s Services board meetings, which were like driving a car with the steering wheel disconnected. I never knew what amazing places we’d go, quite exciting.

So, after that initial idea, I of course thought that nobody would want to read all about me, so I e-mailed some questions to a few of the remarkable people I have come to know through my involvement in OLA. The questions were:

1. How did you first get involved in OLA?
2. How do you think your involvement has helped you grow as a person and a professional? (Or, what have you learned through your involvement that has helped in other areas?)
3. What are the things you value most about your involvement?
4. What else should I have asked you?

I asked library students, school librarians, youth services librarians, academics and support staff, at least one person from every division.

Involvement for some began with the want-ads on the OLA web page, <http://www.olaweb.org/seeking-volunteers>, others joined a committee. Others were invited. Some started while still in library school, others waited till later in their career. I drifted in gradually. Two actually began their involvement as OLA board members. For me, answers to the second question are the heart of the matter and I will quote directly from people’s answers.

Margaret Harmon Myers: “I believe I’m a better employee overall for having been involved with the Support Staff Division. Job satisfaction isn’t a constant, but working with my peers in OLA has given me purpose and satisfaction, as well as confidence in my abilities.”

Danielle Jones: “I have learned so much from being involved with CSD and OYAN. As a new librarian I felt that I was being mentored by more seasoned folks. I got a chance to hear about what other libraries are doing.”

Stephanie Thomas: “I learned more about what’s happening with all types of libraries around our state. This knowledge helped me bring back partnerships and information to other teacher librarians.”



Sylvia Baker: “*Professionally:* I learned much about balancing strengths and weaknesses, how to volunteer generously with skill areas I am strong in and patiently seek opportunities to grow the skill areas that are weak. I learned that professional relationships can nurture your perception of yourself and help you place yourself within the larger world of library services. *Personally:* I learned how to evaluate/balance personal priorities with professional priorities and let them ebb and flow as needed.”

Jeana McClure: “Being an OLA member enriched my master’s program beyond simply attending conferences. I was able to participate in a strategic planning workshop in early 2014, on the heels of completing a strategic planning exercise in my library management class. It was a great experience to see the information from the classroom come to life in that workshop. I also got the idea for my practicum during the strategy workshop, which was to research best practices in story time for OLA’s Children’s Services Division. That exposed me to a wealth of new material and resources, and the best part was getting to exchange ideas with youth librarians from all over the state. Now that I’ve graduated, staying involved through OLA committee work keeps me connected with the profession through the Advocacy Task Force, by contributing to CSD’s literacy calendar, and helping review the youth services guidelines.”

Candice Watkins: “It’s been an incredible and inspiring experience to work with such energetic and devoted library professionals. Mentoring, leadership, social justice, CSD, OYAN, ACRL, school libraries, OBOB, legislative, conference—one organization, OLA, coordinating all of this work? Yes! It has stretched my boundaries for sure; we all need that kind of growth in our work. Without it, things really do become dormant. Challenge brings new passion, new ideas, new perspective, new colleagues, new possibilities!

Being a librarian is as much a part of who I am personally as it is professionally. I carry my library lens everywhere I go; that stretching of my professional boundaries informs my personal life and leads to growth there, too.”

Sara Thompson: “The more involved I get with OLA, the more I recognize how important collaboration and long-term planning can be to our careers and even personal projects. OLA conversations have helped form better connections even with librarians in my own town at other institutions.”

What people value most brought a rich list including:

- Contacts, networking and relationships
- Collaborative atmosphere, inclusiveness and learning from others
- Feeling listened to and enthusiastically welcomed
- Seeing the big picture and
- The opportunity to act in a leadership role that their job doesn’t offer them

The following comments and questions from some respondents were also illuminating.

Margaret: *Why would I recommend OLA involvement to others—what does OLA membership offer them to make it worth the cost of membership? (I hear this question often).*



I find it exciting to be involved in a professional organization where I might help create needed change. This involvement teaches appreciation for what is already being done and for the viewpoints of others. It also keeps me abreast of what is happening with libraries nationwide, from legislation to funding to cutting edge patron service. Isolating oneself to one's own institution can lead to tunnel vision; I see things from a broader view having worked with OLA.


Sara: I tend to be a very future-focused person, so maybe a question about my expectations for the future of OLA. Or where I see OLA going. To answer that—I'd like to see OLA become more cohesive. Rather than splitting ourselves up along lines of academic / public / Portland / rural / large / small / librarian / staff, I'd like to see the emphasis of our communication and conferences be on the things we all have in common as library folks.

Jeana: It would be interesting to explore how to overcome the barriers to participation. I know getting time out of the library to participate, and travel considerations prevent folks from participating fully. Is that problem solvable? Can technology overcome some of that, through Skype, Google hangouts, video conferencing, etc.? Is it possible to sponsor some regional workshops, like in eastern Oregon or southern Oregon, and not be so Salem-Portland focused?

Sylvia: What is your current level of involvement?"

After working with the Support Staff Division Executive Committee and Conference Committee for several years, which I loved, I chose to take a pre-determined (pre-determined by personal responsibilities) amount of time off, before choosing to participate this actively again. So, right now: I am an OLA member, I read the OLA publications and I anticipate participating in conferences in the future.

Clearly, OLA has helped all of us grow, both professionally and personally: new skills, new contacts, deeper connections, a broader vision. What could your involvement do for you? To look at the other side of the coin, sometimes I imagine we could for Oregon, for libraries and their patrons with an even more engaged and involved membership.

I'd like to end with this quote from Sara: "I think OLA is on the cusp of big changes—in identity, in workflows, in outreach and audience. I'm excited to be in the thick of things, both watching and participating as these changes happen. Just think—there will be an OLA time capsule sealed up this year and it won't be opened again until 2040!! I'll be nearing retirement (I hope) by then and my little branch campus will be a drastically different place then it is now. How will OLA be different then? How will we be reaching out to the non-library community about all the great work happening within the library community? And most importantly, will I finally finish reading Moby Dick?" 

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