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Gonzo at the UO Libraries

Leslie Bennett
University of Oregon

Aimee Yogi
University of Oregon

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Gonzo at the UO Libraries

by **Leslie Bennett**
Head of Music Services
University of Oregon

and

Aimee Yogi
Interlibrary Loan Department
University of Oregon

“**D**amas y Caballeros, bienvenidos al fabuloso Gonzo!”

The audience cheered, “Gonzo!” The master of ceremonies, with silver and black sombrero and black glittery scarf covering his face, welcomes the crowd to another Gonzo Revue at the Knight Library of the University of Oregon. He is “El Invisible,” an anonymous staff member resurrected each June to entertain us, and in many years, to introduce the acts.



David Landazuri: Copy Cataloger by day, “El Invisible” during Gonzo.

2004 marked the 20th anniversary of the resurrected Gonzo Revue. Myth and memory state that the Gonzo started in 1977 when former Library Director, William Axford, put together a show of songs and dance. With a change in library administration Gonzo was forgotten from 1980 until 1984, when it resurfaced in spirited storytelling, songs, and dance.

At the Gonzo Review everyone can get into the action: animals, families, and of course, staff. One year a librarian’s beloved

bull-mastiff dog *found the meat* by tracking a piece of bread tacked to the bottom of an audience member’s chair. Along with numerous singing family duos, we’ve had jugglers, tap dancers, drummers, clarinetists, and vocal groups featuring staff families. Staff members have even fulfilled private visions of fame, including one who sang *Animal Crackers in My Soup* while dressed in Mary Janes and a curly hairdo.

Whole departments have gotten into the act as well. Metadata and Digital Library Services (formerly known as the Cataloging Department) are famous for their many routines including: Bootscootin’ Line Dance; a very patriotic synchronized book truck routine by the Catalog Department Book Truck Drill, Revised, Second Edition, to the tune of Stars and Stripes Forever; and a piece by the Catalog Department Kazoo Consort entitled *Finale of the 1812 Overture* (by that famous composer, Tchaikovsky) featuring balloons being popped (or not!) at the appropriate climax of the piece. Not to be outdone, the Circulation Department has provided merriment in routines such as *Waiting for 11: the Automation Rap* (an ode to the early days of online circulation, when the system went down for hours at a time) and, as the Dewey Decimals, performing *Barcodin*, by Lyle Brairy (an obvious ode to another era in library projects).



Erica Rivera and Aimee Yogi perform as well as teach the hula to staff every year at the Gonzo Review.



Dancers take off their shoes or put on their shoes as the case may be! Heather Ward and friends get our heart rates up with Irish jigs and reels. Cataloger Lori Robare and her daughter tap dance to nostalgic standards. Aimee Yogi and Erica Rivera are Gonzo regulars and after they sway through their Hawaiian Hula, staff receive their annual *Hukilau* Hula lesson.

Some performances feature a cross section of staff from various library branches. Of note was a Gilbert and Sullivan rendition by the D'Oyly Shelving Carte Opera Company of *I Am the Very Model of Computerized Librarian*, featuring singers and musicians from all branches of the library system. We've tried our hand at *My Word*, the English game show wherein contestants receive a phrase from literature or proverbs, and make up a story to go with it. A talented library staff ensemble has performed a version of *Stomp*, entitled *Counter Point*, using found library objects as percussion instruments. A highlight of 2004's *Gonzo* was a recreation of that old *Riders in the Sky* routine, *Palindrome*, featuring a slow-talking cowpoke (played by our Documents Center Head, Tom Stave) that used only palindromes to answer questions.



Paul Frantz, Reference Librarian, asks the questions and Tom Stave, Documents Center Head, answers in palindromes during the 2004 *Gonzo*.

But most memorable of all are the many returning performers who have amazed and astounded us with their creativity over the years. We've had Jo-Anne Flanders doing innumerable variations on the *Little Red Riding Hood* story, including *Little Red Hooding Ride*, etc. We've listened to Lawrence Crumb, who truly exemplifies someone with both right-brain and left-brain abilities, performing humorous songs of many decades, including those by Flanders and Swan, parodies on Gilbert and Sullivan, and many a Tom Lehrer ditty. And not to be forgotten is a home-grown library group of 8 to 10 gentlemen known as the Knights of Glee who have provided the library staff with many tuneful and memorable songs (in 4 part harmony no less!) over the years.

Our masters of ceremonies often wear unusual get-ups or present the acts using unique themes. For a couple of years, Bill Woolum, who now teaches courses on Shakespeare at Lane Community College, provided a running dialog about the New Age Library whose leader, Fennel Seed, specialized in whole-earth management practices. Our law librarians haven't been silent either. Angus Nesbit has served as master of ceremonies for several years.

The *Gonzo Revue* has allowed library staff to try out new songs, find their inner poet, share dancing skills with colleagues, and make total fools of themselves in a safe and supportive atmosphere. What more could you ask for staff development? When future library articles ask how to keep your staff motivated, the UO Libraries suggests the perfect solution: hold a *Gonzo Revue* and unlock the creativity in your library staff! 🌿

For a semi-complete list of the UO Libraries' *Gonzo Revues*, see: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/lisa/comm-program/gonzoindex.html>

