

# OLAQ

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## Introduction

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# Introduction

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Shortly after I moved to Oregon three years ago, I began educating myself about the state's tribal libraries. I had spent the previous four years as the library director at D-Q University, California's tribal college. As a tribal college librarian and member of the American Indian Library Association, I had gained an understanding of the unique challenges faced by tribal libraries and became committed to do my part to help improve library services to Native Americans.

I contacted the Oregon State Library to find out how I could get involved in any statewide efforts to improve library services in Oregon's tribal communities. I was excited to hear about the Oregon Collaborative Project, which aims to explore how Oregon's tribal libraries can work with other libraries, archives, and museums to improve their services. When I attended a focus group meeting for this project, I had the pleasure to meet many of the tribal librarians who have contributed to this issue of the *Quarterly*.

In the past few years, I have learned a lot about Oregon's tribal libraries. All nine of Oregon's federally recognized

tribes have tribal libraries or are in the beginning stages of developing a library. Each of the tribes has received the five thousand dollar IMLS Native American Library Services Basic Grant within the past few years. Virtually all of the tribal libraries struggle with funding and staffing troubles, especially those libraries that are in the early stages of development. It can be very difficult to get information about these fledgling tribal libraries, because they usually do not yet have full-time staffing.

Tribal libraries strive to provide isolated communities with vital services and resources, such as literacy programming, health and parenting resources, and books for children. Tribal libraries are often one of the only places on the reservation that offer free access to computers and the Internet. These libraries are an invaluable resource for tribal community members seeking to educate themselves and to learn more about the history of their people.

In an effort to raise awareness about Oregon's tribal libraries, I suggested that there be an OLAQ issue highlighting tribal libraries. Since tribal libraries face many of the same chal-

lenges that are faced by rural libraries, we initially solicited articles about tribal, solo, or rural libraries. I was thrilled by the response from the tribal librarians, who submitted enough articles that we were able to dedicate this entire issue to Oregon's tribal libraries. I am very grateful that these tribal librarians and library administrators were able to spend some of their valuable time to inform us about their libraries.

In describing their individual libraries, Malissa Minthorn-Winks and Julie Quaid provide insight into the operations of many tribal libraries. Malissa discusses the mission of Tamástslit Cultural Institute's Research Library and Archives, which is to preserve the cultural and historical knowledge of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Tribal libraries are often charged with preserving and providing access to information about their tribe. Preserving their traditional knowledge enables tribes to not only reclaim their heritage, but to also educate others about it.

In her article about the Warm Springs Community Library, Julie details her efforts to transform a small



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collection of books stored in a warehouse into a library located in a newly-created Family Resource Center. This endeavor is similar to the efforts currently being undertaken by several Oregon tribes.

Chris Tanner and David Liberty both focus on the unique resources at their respective libraries and how their collections illustrate the tribes' close connections to the land and the broader community. Chris elaborates on the variety of tribal and regional history resources available at the Coquille Indian Tribe Library. David describes the StreamNet Library's unique resources related to fish biology and how they are being used to restore salmon populations in the Columbia River.

The many programs and services offered at the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Library are outlined by Marion Mercier. In her article about the Cow Creek Tribal Library, Kelly LaChance discusses how grants have been essential to maintaining the library's resources.

In addition to tribal librarians, there are several contributions from librarians who work with tribal libraries in Oregon and throughout the country. Catherine Finney shares her rewarding experience as a volunteer at the Warm Springs Library. ALA President-Elect Loriene Roy, outlines the Association's upcoming initiatives that will provide opportunities to tribal libraries. Mary Kay Dahlgreen provides information about the Oregon Collaborative Project and other efforts to improve library ser-

vices to Oregon's Native Americans. The Chair of ALA's new Committee on Rural, Native and Tribal Libraries of All Kinds, Carol Barta, presents the challenges faced by both tribal and rural libraries and the committee's efforts to help alleviate some of these difficulties. Finally, Karen Brown and Kelly Webster write about tribal libraries nationwide and describe what you can do to support these libraries.

If reading this issue inspires you to learn more about tribal libraries, you should consider joining the American Indian Library Association, whose mission is to promote the development of and access to library and information services by American Indian people. Also, be sure to express support for IMLS' Native American Library Services Grant program, which is a very important source of funding for many tribal libraries.

I am thrilled to have had the chance to edit this issue of *OLA Quarterly*. It has provided a great opportunity to raise awareness about our state's tribal libraries, the challenges that they face, the fantastic resources that they contain, and the vital services that they provide. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage the OLA membership to do our part to help Oregon's tribal libraries. We could all work together to make a difference by founding a Friends of Oregon Tribal Libraries. If you are interested in helping to create this Friends group, please contact me at [richenda.wilkinson@linnbenton.edu](mailto:richenda.wilkinson@linnbenton.edu)

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