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## Finding Community: Civics, Cyberspace and Change

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# Finding Community:

## Civics, Cyberspace and Change

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This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* celebrates the ways in which we, as librarians, search for and serve communities that operate in a morphing virtual information environment while retaining our traditional mission of serving each member of our community with equity. The major essays written by our colleagues in this issue are meant to help us think in different and creative ways about who our patrons are and how we can continue to serve individuals in our communities in the various ways they seek information.

“Finding Community” was the theme for this year’s Conference. The environment of the Internet has changed the vision of what the public believes their information and social community to be and libraries need to reflect and empower this dramatic change in order to continue to be a player in people’s information universe.

Initially this issue of the *OLA Quarterly* was planned to highlight and summarize programs at the OLA Conference that brought new insight and practical responses to this reality. But a most curious and symbolic event occurred in the immediate wake of the Conference. The article on NW Central reveals how this one powerful

new community, dedicated to continuing professional education, instantly created the very data we were trying to collect and disseminate in the old fashioned way. It is prophetic that topics for this *Quarterly* should appear so promptly in a virtual online environment and render their reprise here unnecessary.

In this issue, therefore, I have gathered essays about the theme itself. Some are philosophical, like Jim Scheppke’s reflection on the library profession’s response to horizontal collaboration described in Thomas Friedman’s book, *The World is Flat*, or Bruce Flath’s cautionary tale, “Talking with the Enemy.” I hope we can also learn to think of Library as Place with a different social face, as shown in Lyn Craig’s article “LEO: Shining Bright on Communities”, or Library as Non-place in many of its functions, as seen in the responses to a social networking uses questionnaire posted by Abigail Elder of Multnomah County. Rivka Sass, in an essay derived from her Keynote Address, reminds us that integration of library systems into the simplicity of function that characterizes most other transactions today is critical to retaining social relevance in a competitive world. And Kat Davis’ essay

on “The Librarian’s Mind” is a paean to one powerful resource we have to achieve this.

What opportunities are out there for new communities of interest that will fulfill the library’s mission in a changing world? Check out the article on ‘Zines, where, much like NW Central, content derives from and for special interest groups in an easily accessible format for both creation and access. “Libraries2go” describes a new technology community formed to check-out audiobook content without form or place.

From the Vision 2010 Redux meeting in June, 2006, one of the 5 unmet goals for the decade is creating a vision of what an e-library could be. In March the e-services Think Tank of NextGen librarians gathered and created an inspiring and amazing document of possibilities.

To be sure, the whole question of our “community” become a question of our role in society. I hope you enjoy this issue, as well as the trip out on the Internet to enjoy summaries of programs from our outstanding conference.

Aletha Bonebrake  
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