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President's Conference Issue

The OLA presidential theme this year has been, "Keep keeping up and renewing ourselves." This isn't what it might sound like, a theme and an afterthought. Nor is it ambivalent about what's more important: keeping ahead of technological change and the ensuing societal impacts, or how we keep ourselves continually energized and trained to keep changing and articulating the importance of what we do to a public that might be inclined to think we are obsolete. I've come to think of this theme as the what and the how of our work.

That as a profession we are continually updating our skills; implementing new technologies; preparing ourselves to see literacy, access, place, searching, retrieval, research processes, and learning differently are imperative and something in which we are already well-versed. One of my favorite quotes about libraries comes from an academic information technology magazine:

If you had told people a decade ago that card catalogs would virtually disappear within ten years and would be replaced by our current information-management systems, they would not have believed you. Librarians have been the real heroes of the digital revolution in higher education.

They are the ones who have seen the farthest, done the most, accepted the hardest challenges, and demonstrated most clearly the benefits of digital information. In the process, they have turned their own field upside down and have revolutionized their professional training. It is testimony to their

success that we take their achievement—and their information-management systems—for granted.
(Ayers, 2004)

While this quote comes from the higher education context, the transformation of libraries has been no less striking. But it is not as if all this success in changing our libraries comes without hard work and acting on our deep commitment to the profound values and worth libraries bring to our communities.

This issue has been an opportunity to gather examples of the many projects and changes that libraries are making in their successful efforts to keep up. Who's doing something interesting in regard to technology? Who is delivering an old service in a new guise, who has been at this longer than I have and what sources of inspiration do they find in their work? I might as well have asked, "What do you love about being a librarian?" Because that's what came, projects born of pride and love and realized in Oregon libraries.

Liisa Sjoblom outlines a technology training project involving the entire staff of the Deschutes public library system. In doing so she underscores that library workers of all ranks need to have up to the minute skills and that innovation can spring from every level of the library organization.

Jane Nichols addresses keeping up technologically, literally. The blog Infodoodads has gotten lots of notice in national library circles. Aside from my pleasure in reading this blog, I believe that OLA members should take enormous pride that it comes out of Oregon

State University Libraries. Nichols, one of its contributors, outlines a mindset and strategies that orient her for the information ubiquity of our culture and for being a leader in adopting new technologies and methods.

Heather Brockerman takes on describing the next evolution in library catalog search engines. Visual structures for organizing information sets will necessitate changes in our thinking about search skills and users' approaches to finding information.

Susan Barnes Whyte and Loretta Rielly talk about what keeps them renewed and evolving after 25 years of librarianship. I'm thinking about lifting a quote from their article to print a tattoo for next year's Past President's fundraiser: "Energized by change and comfortable with uncertainty."

Abigail Elder reminds us of what we have to do to keep the ideal of libraries alive and finds renewal in those acts themselves.

And finally, Linda Absher, Oregon's own Lipstick Librarian gives us the straight dope on renewal.

Reference

Ayers, Edward L. 2004. "The academic culture and the IT culture: their effect on teaching and scholarship." *Educause Review*, 39 (6), (Nov/Dec). <http://connect.educause.edu/Library/EDUCAUSE+Review/TheAcademicCultureandtheI/40512> (accessed May 9, 2008).

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