
Volume 15
Number 2
Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories
(Summer 2009)

July 2014

One Preconference: Much Impact

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Recommended Citation

Smith, H., & Ginnane, M. (2014). One Preconference: Much Impact. *OLA Quarterly*, 15(2), 16-17.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1244>

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OLA Quarterly is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

One Preconference: Much Impact

by Heydi Smith
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and

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Mary: What led to your employment at Stayton Public Library?

Heydi: I visited the Stayton Library quite often. When my husband and I learned that the city was building an addition onto the library, we wondered if they might need more staff with the larger space. I asked and they said they might once the remodel was done. I continued asking every week! I interviewed ... they called me up and here I am. For which I am eternally grateful, since I had no library experience, other than as a devoted patron.

Mary: Where had you been previously employed?

Heydi: I worked for an Elder Care business as a secretary. Before that I worked as a legal secretary for a divorce attorney.

Mary: What led to your attendance at the “Got Teens? Building Readers & Reaching Out” preconference?

Heydi: Since I am only a library aide, being allowed to go to any kind of meeting is astounding. I was asked if I’d want to go to the preconference regarding teens ... which through my own research I had already found out about and really wanted to attend. For me the OLA preconference was a dream come true. Getting the opportunity to attend the Got Teens? preconference was exciting because I knew I would gain more knowledge on how I could better serve our young adults.

Mary: Describe the space and services for teens at Stayton Public Library up to the point you attended the preconference.

Heydi: Our library is newly expanded and we now have a teen area. Oddly enough, teens are now venturing in! However, when

they get to the library, then what? I am currently learning about and starting teen programs at my library. I completely love my job and have really found a passion for working with teens. But love and passion does not make you knowledgeable.

Mary: What was it like going to the Salem Conference Center for your first OLA Conference?

Heydi: Since this was my first time at an OLA Conference I didn’t know what to expect and I was very nervous. When I got to the Center everything was so organized and I was able to tell right where I was supposed to go to sign in. Then I walked around and looked for the appropriate room. All the titles for the other sessions I passed by looked so tempting, like “Listen Up: Audio Books in the Library.” The “Basic Book Repair for Libraries” is also an interesting topic since I deal with many well-loved books that have to be reassembled, so to speak. The one that especially caught my eye, though, was “Introduction to Music Cataloging.” I consoled myself about not being able to go to these programs with the fact that OLA has a conference every year and I can’t learn everything in one day, even though I greatly want to.

Mary: Tell me some ideas from the teen preconference that you are trying to apply at your library.

Heydi: One major realization was how and what teen boys are reading and how to make book lists they will actually pick up. Without realizing it, they are reading all the time through world record accounts, video games, magazines, comics and sports stats. If we make a list of general teen books they probably won’t even look at it. But if we make a list consisting of things they are already reading then it will be a natural progression



for them to want more. Basically: we should have a wide variety of books on our lists to attract boys—subjects like hunting, math puzzles, sports, and Guinness record books. Another thing about boys is that they like games in which they are the character. In a story they only get to relate to the character. Lastly, I appreciated this key phrase, “We should try to harness the potential energy, not cage or tame it.” This phrase in particular has educated me more than anything on how to handle our young adults who act rowdy in the library.

Mary: Are there other ideas from the preconference you are trying?



Teen area, Stayton Public Library

Heydi: I learned a lot about programming for teens and what they are looking for in a program: a chance to show expertise, hang out with friends, and a neutral place to try new things. This has helped me a great deal in planning our first teen summer program. Also, teen councils were discussed, mostly their importance, not only in getting feedback from teens but giving them a chance to see that we care about their opinion. Since then I have started a teen advisory board (TAB). It truly has changed the way I look at teen programming. It is so nice to be able to ask teens straight out what they want and how would they like it presented and even nicer that they actually respond with insightful and extremely helpful comments. The decorations in the picture of the teen area were suggested by our TAB and wow, do they make a difference! We are also starting a graphic novel collection, per their request.

Mary: What else impressed you?

Heydi: It was great knowing that the power point presentations would be online to access later. I think this is definitely the way to go. I was really able to listen intently to the advice and experiences the speakers had. Not having to copy what was on the slides meant that when they said something that gave me an idea for future use I could take time to write it down instead of pushing it out of my mind trying to concentrate on getting every word down.

Lunch was great. I'm not talking about the food either. I mean the Association. All of the people that sat at my table were in the Got Teens? session, so they work with teens. With that knowledge I knew that now was my chance to get my questions answered. I had been told that many people don't like sharing their "secrets" to success but I have not found that to be the case among children's and teen librarians. 

