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Oregon's 150th: Libraries Then and Now

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Oregon's 150th: Libraries Then and Now

Oregonians have commemorated the 150th anniversary of our state during 2009 with a myriad of activities, including the highly successful statewide Oregon Reads program co-sponsored by the Oregon Library Association. This sesquicentennial anniversary also offers us the opportunity to reflect on the history of our own libraries and the library profession in Oregon. For decades, libraries have served as the conduit to knowledge in a democratic society. Now, as in the past, libraries offer sanctuary through difficult economic times by providing access to much-needed information and services. This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* provides views of the history of Oregon libraries through several lenses and includes a selection of historic photographs depicting Oregon libraries and library services during the 20th century.

Cheryl Gunselman's article highlights the audacious librarians who were instrumental in bringing the 1905 American Library Association (ALA) annual conference to Portland, at a time when Oregon libraries were mere fledglings and the ALA conference was rarely held in the west. Imagine planning a conference that required several days of train travel for most attendees and included a post-conference Alaskan cruise.

Jim Scheppke sketches the history of Oregon public library buildings' construction by focusing on two major phases of development of library building practices separated by more

than 70 years—Carnegie libraries built before 1920 and new or expanded libraries built since 1990.

A retired history professor, Tom McClintock, describes his own experience of researching and writing an extensive history of the Corvallis public library. His article is followed by a checklist of how to research and write your library's history.

Professional training for librarians in Oregon has evolved significantly in the last 30 years. Valery King recalls her experience as a graduate in the last library science class at the University of Oregon while Linda Malone and Andrew Cherbas discuss the advantages and disadvantages of distance and hybrid distance-weekend programs which have become the norm for training Oregon librarians since the 1990s.

A photographer's lens captures a moment in time, an expression, an event, and a multitude of other details long-since forgotten. The historic photographs included in this issue depict early library buildings and a variety of library services throughout the state. They remind us that, as much as libraries have changed, the core principles of librarianship remain the same. The photographs are from the collections of the American Library Association Archives at the University of Illinois, the Oregon State Library collections held by the Oregon State Archives, and the Oregon State University Libraries Digital Collections. Many other photographs of Oregon libraries are available online in the Or-

gon Historic Photograph Collections hosted by the Salem Public Library (<http://photos.salemhistory.net/>).

Historical tidbits about Oregon libraries are interspersed among the articles and photographs throughout the issue. These have been selected from the online *Oregon Encyclopedia*; Thomas C. McClintock's *The Best Gift*; Web sites of the Oregon State University Archives, the Oregon Library Association, and the Pacific Northwest Library Association; and personal communication from Cheryl Hancock (Harney County Library).

We thank all the authors for their contributions to this issue and extend special appreciation to Teresa Landers (formerly of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library) who served as a co-editor of the issue in its early development and recruited several of the article authors.

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