

July 2014

It's as Simple as a Phone Call

Lee Catalano
Multnomah County Library

Catherine Carroll
Troutdale School District

Kiva Liljequist
Metropolitan Learning Center

Susan Smallsreed
Multnomah County Library

Recommended Citation

Catalano, L., Carroll, C., Liljequist, K., & Smallsreed, S. (2014). It's as Simple as a Phone Call. *OLA Quarterly*, 15(4), 4-7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1256>

© 2014 by the author(s).

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

It's as Simple as a Phone Call

by *Lee Catalano,
Catherine Carroll,
Kiva Liljequist &
Susan Smallsreed*

*Lee Catalano
School Corps Librarian,
Multnomah County Library,
Portland, OR*

*Catherine Carroll
Teacher/Librarian,
Walt Morey Middle School,
Troutdale, OR*

*Kiva Liljequist
Library Media Specialist,
Metropolitan Learning Center,
Portland, OR*

*Susan Smallsreed
Youth Librarian,
Northwest Library
(Multnomah County Library),
Portland, OR*



Front row, left to right: Lee Catalano and Kiva Liljequist
Back row, left to right: Catherine Carroll and Susan Smallsreed

“Serendipity arrived in my school mailbox.” Catherine Carroll, Teacher Librarian.

“Susan’s reaching out to me made all the difference.” Kiva Liljequist, Library Media Specialist.

The job description of librarians at Multnomah County Library states that he or she will “maintain an active relationship with the educational community,” and the youth librarians in our system take this dictum to heart. Each of the youth librarians at our 17 (soon to be 19) library locations works closely with teachers and library staff in their service areas. Here are a few stories:

Catherine Carroll began her career as a Teacher Librarian at Walt Morey Middle School in east Multnomah County in 2002.

The school was only three years old; the starter collection was excellent, but small. “I knew I needed help,” she explains.

“Serendipity arrived in my school mailbox in the form of a flyer from Multnomah County Library announcing just the services I could use to supplement my collection. My teachers required a compilation of books on specific topics, to use for research projects. The Bucket of Books (also known as an Assignment Alert) was a perfect match. Librarians gather a selection of 25–30 books on a topic, often including a teacher’s guide with an annotated list of age-appropriate Web sites, and a pathfinder for doing research. All of this was ready for pick up within two weeks or so from my request, at the branch library nearest to me. I contacted the library staff, introduced myself and began a relationship with Multnomah County Library that continues



to grow with my program every year.”

In addition to the curriculum support, Carroll continues, “Over the years, our students and staff have received free training on a myriad of web-related research and safety skills related to information literacy, as well as access to the library’s outstanding collection of databases.”

Kiva Liljequist is the Library Media Specialist at the Metropolitan Learning Center, a K–12 alternative school located near downtown Portland. When she was new to her school, she relied on the public library as well. Librarians are “always available to me,” she explains. “They come to teach high-schoolers about electronic databases, they gather public library materials for students to use, they compile lists of topic- and age-appropriate web sites, and they even come to staff meetings to educate teachers about their services. The support they provide is endless and invaluable.”

Liljequist also has fostered a great working relationship with the Youth Librarian at her school’s nearest branch library. “At work one day in late August, a woman walked over to me and said, ‘Hi! I’m Susan! What do you wanna work on together?’ The woman was Susan Smallsreed, the youth librarian from the Northwest Library; and by coming to introduce herself, she opened the door to great collaborations and an increased awareness on my part of the myriad services that our public librarians are excited to offer.

“Susan’s reaching out to me made all the difference; I don’t know that I would have ever thought to go to my local branch and look for the youth librarian there.”

Carroll works closely with the Youth Librarian at her local branch as well, and she notes the reciprocal qualities of their relationship: “What do I provide in return? KIDS! Our building has the highest rate of participation in their summer reading program. My students are library volun-

teers, and members of the Teen Council. My library information board promotes programs and activities occurring at both our libraries.”

Liljequist’s youth librarian, Susan Smallsreed, also sees the benefits: “Partnering with schools is an easy way to build and maintain relationships with young library users and to instill a respect for the public library’s resources as they age towards tax-paying community members.

“A partnership has many advantages,” Smallsreed continues. “For the public librarian the major advantage is access to kids and parents. We maintain relationships started in storytime, meet even more students and can market library programs and events (e.g. think Summer Reading Program volunteers!).

“The school librarian gets support for literacy enrichment activities like book groups, book talking, program promotion,



To make it happen, he needs you.

As an information specialist, you do more than connect individuals to publications. You help them find inspiration. As the leading information services provider, EBSCO can help you do it. We provide information management systems that free up your time so you can focus on your users.

EBSCO
information to inspiration

www.ebsco.com

and someone to help him or her access curriculum support resources for teachers. A visit from a public librarian can lend authority to school activities. And of course, students and teachers get access to a much larger collection, an alternative meeting space and a fabulous collegial relationship!”

Smallsreed, Liljequist and Carroll offer some suggestions for public librarians wanting to collaborate with their school colleagues, and vice versa. Public library staff can:

- Share information about the library services designed particularly for educators, such as an Educator Library Card (see box).
- Promote participation in public library events, such as a visiting author or other literary activities.
- Provide multiple copies of books as well as snacks for an in-school book club.
- Offer and give tours of the public library.
- Get library card registration forms to the school.
- Promote the summer reading program with presentations, booktalks, class visits and opportunities to register.
- Be a guest reader at special school events.
- Donate a storytime as an auction item for school fundraisers.

Multnomah County Library’s School Corps

In 1997, Youth Services Director Ellen Fader feared that budget cuts would reduce students’ access to library services. She and five librarians created the School Corps dedicated to outreach and collaboration with staff at school libraries. Twelve years later, the Schools Corps—now four (3.0 FTE) librarians—is still going strong meeting the information needs of Multnomah County students. In the most recent school year, School Corps provided services to over 43,000 teachers and students through a variety of programs. School Corps librarians provide onsite training in using the library’s online resources, offer booktalking programs—focused on reaching those County schools not meeting 3rd grade reading benchmarks, create customized—as well as standardized—classroom book collections, and make presentations to both parents and students regarding safe and effective internet use. The librarians reach out to students in after-school programs by offering literacy-based activities. And each summer, School Corps connects with teachers and library staff through new books workshops: Gotta Read This and Novel-ties. For more information, visit School Corps’ Web site: <http://www.multcolib.org/schoolcorps/>.



- Teach literacy enrichment classes.
- Purchase and promote Young Reader's Choice Award nominee books.

School library staff can:

- Communicate with teachers about public library activities, and introduce the local librarian into the classroom.
- Identify classroom projects that would benefit from public library collaboration (e.g. create a classroom library system).
- Keep public library staff apprised of school library activities, such as Oregon Battle of the Books, Book Jeopardy, Read for the Record; as well as "home-made" programs like creating book trailers, poetry slams, or book/movie clubs—then invite her (or him) to join you!
- Get library card registration forms to teachers.
- Link from your Web site to public library resources specifically for students, such as the Homework Center or L-net.
- Dedicate library bulletin board space (or similar) to public library promotional materials.
- Support student participation in public library activities, such as membership in the Teen Council, or volunteering.


- Share stories of public and school library collaboration with principals and parents.

Each of the library staffers interviewed for this article concluded with the same advice:

"All it took was one initial phone call" (Catherine).

"All it takes is a phone call" (Kiva).

"It's as simple as a phone call" (Susan).

So, put down this magazine and start dialing! 

Educator Library Cards

Following a series of educator focus groups in 2002, Multnomah County Library created a library card specifically for childcare providers, K–12 educators, and homeschooling teachers/parents. Cardholder privileges include a longer checkout period (six weeks) and an unfilled hold list of up to 40 items. Unlike the library's other services to educators, any qualifying individual eligible for a Multnomah County Library card, as well as fee-paying card holders, can obtain an educator library card. For more information, visit the Web site: <http://www.multcolib.org/schoolcorps/edcard.html>.

