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The Best of Both Worlds: School and Public Libraries Team Up for Training

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The Best of Both Worlds:

School and Public Libraries Team Up for Training

by **Stephen Cox & Beverly Harris**

Stephen Cox, Salem-Keizer School District Library Media Program Specialist
Background: Stephen Cox has worked for six years as a high school Library Media teacher, 12 years as a video production teacher and eight years as an Associate Principal in Oregon and Washington State.

Beverly Harris, Salem Public Library Associate
Background: Bev Harris has worked in the Technical Services Division of Salem Public Library since 1973. She is currently the Lead Cataloger, handling all adult materials. Her duties have also included project supervisor, volunteer coordinator, interview and testing panel member, trainer, and children's cataloger.



Stephen Cox

Stephen Cox:

It had been on our school district's "To Do" list for a number of years: provide a training seminar to all of our school Library Media assistants in how to repair and maintain library books. After polling our assistants and library media teachers regarding who was qualified and willing to teach a book repair class I came up with no candidates. I heard that the Salem Public Library had offered a basic book repair class and contacted Beverly Harris and Sharon Sarver to see whether they would be willing to offer a class for our school district in October, 2008.

I have always felt that public and school libraries have a great deal in common, especially when it comes to damaged books. Library books are used, abused and literally loved to pieces. The challenge for staff at both institutions is in how to prevent, repair and assess book damage. Is it worth the time and effort to repair a damaged book?



Beverly Harris

Beverly Harris and Sharon Sarver from the Salem Public Library shared some good advice for our assistants in an interesting and informative training session.

Beverly Harris:

Early in 2008, I was told to develop a class on book repair for patrons. With the help of Sharon Sarver, who does our book repair and trains volunteers to assist, we identified the most common types of book damage and developed a three hour class to demonstrate how to repair those damages using materials readily available to the general public. We also discussed damage prevention.

Between April and November of 2008, 117 people attended offered classes. From class discussions and evaluations, we learned that some school library staff from Salem-Keizer Schools had attended, as did staff and volunteers from other public libraries, church libraries and academic libraries. We



also learned our class filled a need for area libraries as well as for our patrons.

Subsequently, I was contacted by Stephen Cox, head of Library Media Services for Salem-Keizer Schools, and asked if Sharon and I would present our class to media assistants and school librarians on their statewide in-service day. Steve's request was approved by the library director.

This was new territory for Sharon and me. What could we offer to such a group that they didn't already know? I reviewed class evaluations to re-read comments from those who had identified themselves as library staff. From this, our class was modified for library staff.

The class's main goal was to attain proficiency in six basic book repair procedures: cover protection, corners, spines, torn pages, loose pages and hinges. Since we were working with library staff, we used library-quality supplies, providing attendees with lists of supplies commonly needed in book repair and of vendors. After I showed examples of each type of damage, Sharon demonstrated repair. Questions, discussion and idea-sharing were lively. After our lecture and demonstrations, hands-on practice was encouraged.

Secondary goals were to offer ideas for damage prevention, encourage volunteer help to allow for more repair, and promote ongoing collection development.

Damage prevention for school libraries may differ somewhat than for public libraries. We talked about ideas to teach students how to care for both library books and textbooks. Remember "back when" our teachers showed us how to break in new textbooks? Might time spent to protect new textbook corners be worth it if books last longer? There is also a too-many or too-few guide to library shelves—too many books

on a shelf can cause spines to be more easily torn as students pull them off, while too few books on a shelf can cause hinge damage if bookends aren't used correctly. Direct sun over a long period of time can dry out book glue and make spines brittle, resulting in more damage. Shelving oversize books on their fore-edges can put pressure on hinges, as text blocks try to pull down.

Staff at both public and school libraries often have to decide which book repairs will be done based on how much time is needed for repair. By recruiting and training volunteers, more repair can be done. Partially as a result of our repair classes, Salem Public has recruited and trained enough volunteers to double the number of repairs we do, compared to a year ago.

Ongoing collection development and maintenance is a universal challenge. Sharon and I offered some reasons for such work from the perspective of book repair. Should outdated books be repaired, or should they be removed from the collection? Are books being damaged because the shelves are too full? Why are the shelves too full? When is it time to withdraw books instead of repairing them? Who decides when books are beyond repair? What factors determine whether books will be repaired—labor costs, books' cost, type of damage?

At the end of class, everyone appeared invigorated to go back to their libraries and try new methods or share ideas. They must have liked the class, since Sharon and I have now been asked to duplicate this class for two sessions at the OASL Conference this fall. 

