

# OLAQ

OLA Quarterly

---

Volume 18  
Number 4

*Adventures in Library Land: Stories and Advice  
for Those New and Needing to Renew (Winter  
2012)*

---

July 2014

## Youth Services Today

Jane Corry  
*Multnomah County Library*

### Recommended Citation

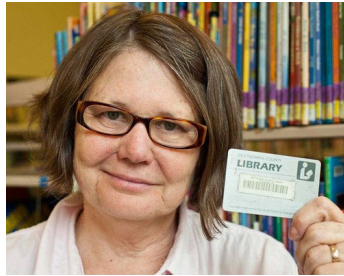
Corry, J. (2014). Youth Services Today. *OLA Quarterly*, 18(4), 12-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1372>

© 2014 by the author(s).

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

# Youth Services Today

by Jane Corry  
Youth Librarian,  
Belmont Library,  
Multnomah County Library



## Current Favorite Books

Picture Book: *Oh, No*  
by Candace Fleming

Chapter Book: *The Second Life of Abigail Walker*  
by Frances O'Rourke Dowell

Teen: *The FitzOsbornes at War*  
by Michele Cooper

Adult: *Words Under the Words*  
by Naomi Shihab Nye

Twenty four years ago, when I first moved to Oregon, my daughter and I attended storytimes at our local library. As a volunteer, with no other parent in the room, it was my job to keep the children in order while the librarian read to them. I remember the librarian sharing a few stories. I imagine there were songs, but I don't remember them. Then there would be a short movie, looking back I think it was probably a Weston Woods movie. I don't know if other storytimes were like this. I do know that we'd only had our VCR for about two years, so the movie was probably a rare treat for some of the children.

That was then, this is now—let me share a scene from a recent storytime. “If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands”—the one-year-olds in this storytime aren't singing along, but some of them are clapping on cue. A few are wandering around and there's one pulling on the closet door because he knows that's where the toys, which will be coming out in 20 minutes, are kept. One's looking at the quilt over in the corner. Two are dancing, though not together. The parents are singing and we're all having a great time together.

In some ways, youth services has changed little over the years. We still do storytimes. We still connect young readers with just the right book and deal with the kid who needs three print sources for the report that's due tomorrow, even though all our books about Ponce De Leon have been checked out already. We still have the thrill of watching our storytime kids grow into readers and researchers and Summer Reading volunteers. We write recommendations for their first jobs and their college applications. We continue to advocate for children within the library community, with our coworkers and our administrators.

In other ways, youth services has changed, like the rest of librarianship. Most people think immediately of technology. We try to convince that kid that our databases count as print resources, that it's not the same as Wikipedia. Now with the proliferation of ebooks, that's an easier sell than it was a few years ago. For years, there have been computers with games on them in the children's section, later, Internet computers were added. We walk a fine line between access and “protecting them from the dangers of the Internet.” In Multnomah County, we've begun the slow process of replacing our networked CD-ROM game computers with iPads. We worry about not just the adults who can't afford their own computer, but the equally serious problem of children who don't have access in the era of “digital natives” and the serious implications of them falling ever further behind.



Another area of change is storytime. In 2004, PLA and ALSC rolled out “Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® (ECRR),” a program that grew out of the National Reading Panel’s 2000 report.[1] Now, in addition to our already literacy-infused storytimes, librarians have been trained to provide trainings to parents and caregivers. 117 librarians and 177 home visitors were trained through the Reading for Healthy Families grant.[2] Other librarians were trained apart from the grant. The result of this early literacy education for librarians is that we now have scientific validation for the things we were doing intuitively. Those silly songs we sing don’t just settle and focus the children; they improve vocabulary and phonological awareness. We’ve made storytimes more participatory because we’ve learned that dialogic reading increases comprehension. We also find phrases like “phonological awareness” rolling off our tongues in storytime. We share this new knowledge with parents in storytime and in the stacks. In ECRR, we have a tool to train parents and caregivers in early literacy concepts and practices.

In preparation for this article I emailed several youth librarians throughout the state, asking for their observations on changes they see in youth services. Everyone mentioned the Internet, how much time we now spend online, how much time we spend on email, and how print reference resources are dwindling as online sources proliferate. Things that used to warrant a face-to-face meeting are now done online. Deborah Gitlitz, Bilingual Youth Librarian at Multnomah County, notes: “I can remember when we first had public-access Internet computers at my first library, and how we tried to figure out policies for them and where to put them (it never occurred to us to put some in the children’s area). Jana Hoffman, the Supervisory Librarian—Children’s, at Milwaukie Leding Library, says: “The most obvious change is the arrival of the Internet. I now spend huge amounts of the workday online—whether helping patrons, placing orders, publicizing programs, or just communicating with staff.”

When it comes to readers advisory, Deborah notes she still gets to do a lot. Dana Campbell, Youth Services Librarian at Corvallis-Benton County Library, shares: “Then: the kids were browsers; now they need accelerated readers and only want to read series and books that are thick. So many great single books are overlooked. Today: everyone is in a hurry; the kids’ days are packed.” I too have noticed many parents and children coming in looking for a book “at their level.” I find I enjoy the challenge of working with the parents to find a book that the child will be excited to read, which is much more important in the long run than reading a book at their reading level. At last year’s Oregon Library Association conference, youth librarians were very excited by a presentation by Barbara Steinberg, a Reading Specialist in private practice. She introduced some of us to Bloom’s taxonomy for the first time. Again, science comes to support what we already practice intuitively. She noted that school teachers are so busy, they can only focus on reading for comprehension, but there are several levels of understanding beyond comprehension that create greater meaning for the reader. She told us that teachers teach the children how to read and our job of encouraging reading for pleasure is even more crucial in this era without school librarians.

One way we encourage reading is through the Summer Reading Program. According to statistics at the state library in 2011 and 2012, 31 percent of 0 to 14-year-olds in the state signed up for Summer Reading[3]. Since 2003, Oregon has been a very vocal member of the Collaborative Summer Library Program, meaning librarians across the state no longer have to develop our own programs, but work with librarians from all 50 states to create the manual, hire artists, decide on a theme, and scout out prizes.




Jana Hoffman mentions another big change—serving language communities other than English. “We now offer our summer reading program materials in Spanish as well as English, and we have significant Russian & Spanish language collections for children and adults.” Spanish or bilingual storytimes and early literacy classes are offered in libraries throughout the state. Multnomah County also serves Vietnamese and Chinese patrons with materials and storytimes in those languages. Libraries throughout the state celebrate El Día de los Niños, with family programming celebrating Hispanic Culture. Of the 16 libraries nationwide to win the Estela and Raúl Mora award for their Día celebrations since 2000, three of them have been Oregon libraries.

Another huge impact on youth services is the dwindling presence of school librarians. Jana points out that when she started, there were librarians in the schools. Now, most schools don’t have them and it is impossible for the public library to fill that gap. In the age of ever increasing amounts of information being readily accessible, one wonders who is tasked with teaching information literacy. Do teachers have the time? Is it being systematically addressed?

Children’s Services has changed and continues to do so. Two things that are occupying youth librarians now are how we can create opportunities for more STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) learning in libraries and the impact of the new Core Competency State Standards. Wilsonville has a summer science program as well as their summer reading program. Other librarians are trying to integrate science and math into storytimes, and some have even started Lego groups. Korie Buerkle, the incoming Chair of the OLA Children’s Services Division, is heading a STEM committee to facilitate sharing of ideas and resources between youth librarians around the state.

The other priority is the new Core Competency State Standards that schools around the country are adopting. With their stress on higher thinking skills and increased reading of nonfiction and primary sources, it is an opportunity for librarians to do what we do best, provide resources and facilitate learning for all. We can also help teachers in selecting good nonfiction titles.

As a librarian in a neighborhood library, most of my time and thought are spent on the tasks at hand: the next storytime, working the reference desk, and preparing book talks for school visits. I rarely step back to take a more distanced look at what it is we do—how we’ve become a major player in early literacy, how we keep learning and adapting to changes in society and advances in technology, all the while keeping in mind the needs of our core audience: children and their parents and caregivers. I’m happy I got this chance to do that. 

## References

[1] National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

[2] <http://tinyurl.com/ajf22wd>

[3] Anderson, K. Oregon State Library, Youth Services. (2012). *Summer reading statistics* <http://www.oregon.gov/osl/LD/youthsvcs/srp.certificates/OregonSRPstatistics2011.pdf>

