OLAQ

July 2014

Creating new connections: Reports from the 1995 OLA conference

Creating New Connections

Reports from the 1995 OLA Conference

Introduction

by Teresa Montgomery
Southern Oregon State College

In spite of deafening construction noise during the Wednesday preconference and Thursday morning sessions, the 1995 OLA Conference was successful. Drawing 686 attendees and 62 exhibitors to the Portland Hilton, the conference program featured many excellent sessions from all segments of the Oregon library profession. One of the many high points of the conference was Urban Libraries Council President Eleanor "Joey" Rodgers' address at the First General Session. Peppering her speech with quotes from *Harvard Business Review* articles and Mary Oliver's poetry, Rodgers urged librarians to examine closely our values and functions. By being clear and focused on these, we can concentrate our efforts on what we do, not on the building. In her words, "It's the water, not the well." She sees the shift to networked information as analogous to piping water to houses. Libraries are a means, not the ends. As a profession, librarians should be concentrating on library services, not the building. She concluded that there surely is a future for librarians for the world "needs our skills and values to get the water of information ... to people."

The *OLA Quarterly* guest editors for this issue asked OLA members to send us the following short reports on some of the programs presented at this year's conference.

Developing the Electronic Library
Issues and Decisions

by Ruth Vondracek
Western Oregon State College Library

Over one hundred people gathered to listen and discuss issues raised by the guest speaker Peggy Johnson, the assistant director of the St. Paul Campus Libraries and the strategic planning officer for the University of Minnesota Library System. She recently co-edited *Collection Management and Development: Issues in an Electronic Era.*

Peggy Johnson's main point came through clearly: librarians need to react not to the technology itself, but to its consequences. She emphasized the importance of writing and expanding collection development policies to address electronic products. Many of the considerations for collection development of electronic resources mirror the concerns for collection of traditional resources. Basic selection criteria for electronic resources should not vary greatly

from selecting other types of sources. Libraries should continue to develop policies that reflect the primary mission of library and information centers, to organize information, and to make it accessible. A few of the common issues for collection development of traditional sources and electronic sources are developing clear evaluation and selection criteria, designating sufficient funding, preservation and archival responsibilities, and determination of responsibility for collecting materials.

Unique aspects encountered in the collection of electronic resources are licensing agreements and variable pricing structures. Electronic products present greater financial risk because of their high cost and the accompanying need for specialized equipment and facilities modification. Criteria for evaluation and selection of products must consider continuing vendor support and reliability. Because formats and operating hardware change rapidly, it is also difficult to confidently address future needs. As Ms. Johnson said, "The future is a moving target."

Some questions librarians must ask themselves and address in collection development policies include the following: What percentage of funding should be devoted to electronic resources? Who is responsible for collecting electronic resources? How do you integrate the decision-making that must take place concerning the user interfaces and the hardware and system requirements for specific products?

Following Peggy Johnson's lecture, the audience broke into discussion groups organized around key issues such as electronic collection development policies, evaluating electronic products, instruction, and processing electronic materials.

After discussion group reports, Johnson suggested that they could be distilled into six major points: 1) The electronic environment is one of rapid change, which can cause stress in the workplace. 2) Librarians need more information, skills, and guidance to make decisions about electronic resources. 3) The local environment should determine the decisions that are made concerning electronic products. 4) There must be a move to standardization of hardware and software. 5) The creation and implementation of collection development policies continues to be of utmost importance. 6) User expectations have increased and will continue to increase in the electronic environment.

Connecting with Your Government

by Jane Appling
Newport Public Library

Attendees of the Public Library Division's *Connecting with Your Government* preconference emerged ready to win the hearts (and dollars and political support) of the people they work for and with. Newberg City Manager Duane Cole, Assistant to the Canby City Administrator Sarah Jo Chaplen, and Canby Library Directory Beth Saul exhorted us to "know what's important to your council;" to be visi-

ble in unexpected places; and to shamelessly use library assets like "neutral ground" meeting space, volunteers, and computer skills when they can to win over someone whom information services will never touch. Librarians Amy Kinnard of Jackson County and Jane Kirby of Salem then described their experiences with structured municipal information services at Pasadena, California, and Salem libraries. Larry Calkins, Jackson County, provided samples of "service to government" promotional materials from several libraries. Pasadena's special services for government workers, for both personal and job-related needs, have proven a very successful strategy in making the library indispensable.

Among the many ideas coming from the session were: Make the library a Block Home or Neighborhood Watch member; use paycheck envelopes to get library information to all city employees; offer to purchase other departments' training materials to take advantage of library discounts and jobbers; put the library on every employee's desk by using email and hooking catalogs/databases into city computer networks; use fire substations as book return points; and, of course, invite everyone from the sewer plant foreman to the county commissioner to storytime!

Volunteers! Public Library Division
by Ed House
Albany Public Library

The program presenters covered the central elements of setting up, running, and managing a volunteer program. One of the most important things you should do at the very beginning is talk to your risk management officer to find out what type of liability coverage your organization has for volunteers. We must be aware that we are in a litigious society and see that we and our organization are protected. (Refer to Oregon Revised Statutes 656.004, which defines a covered worker "for remuneration;" .027, which defines non-subject workers; and .031, which defines elective coverage.) Train your volunteers on safety and incident reporting and have them sign a waiver form acknowledging that they are responsible to work safely. Place your volunteer coordinator on your safety committee. Treat your volunteers as employees. Consider the breadth and depth of potential risk. Again, always remember we are in a litigious society.

The key elements of volunteer management were discussed, including planning, job description, recruitment, placement, orientation, training, supervision, recognition, program evaluation, and record keeping.

Organization of Technical Services
by Teresa Montgomery
Southern Oregon State College

In front of a packed house, Mark Watson, head of cataloging at the University of Oregon, led off the program with some blue-sky ideas of technical services operations in the 21st century, when catalogers will telecommut via DNA-based computers. He then moved on to highlight some of the more likely immediate trends such as spending more library funds on access to materials rather than the materials themselves, more electronic ordering, modular construction of bibliographic records, and expanding the domain of cataloging to encompass works not held by the library. Within Oregon, he foresees more cooperative cataloging and cooperative collection development now that Orbis has arrived.

After sparking the audience's interest with his vision of the future, Watson challenged it with these questions: "Is your technical services operation change aware? Are you confronting, molding, and managing change? Are you training and upgrading your skills?" He asked us to consider what role cataloging will play in helping users to maneuver around full text to find the nuggets of information they need and want. Traditionally the methods for distributing materials and for supplying access were separate, but the new electronic media, such as the World Wide Web's hypertext links, are blurring that separateness.

At the same time that technical services faces new and ongoing technological challenges, new theories of management are affecting the organization of departments. Libraries are moving to flat structural models often based on teams and focused on the "customer." At the University of Oregon they have recently implemented teams in cataloging, each team composed of a librarian and a paraprofessional. Watson concluded with the thought that technical services will "reinvigorate itself by taking on the technological challenges of electronic media."

Dee Iltis spoke of the organizational changes at the State Library brought on by its change of mission and budget reductions since 1993. It too has moved to a team approach in its organization of technical services. As part of the reorganization, the staff wrote up a team charter, including a mission statement, a statement of accountability, performance measures, their resources, team leadership, and the team members' responsibilities. Iltis emphasized planning and training as the two overriding components of a successful reorganization.

During the second half of the program, a lively discussion among the audience and panel focused primarily around personnel issues—especially equity—and on the philosophical direction of technical services.

Children's Report
by Rebecca Cohen
Newport Public Library

The 1995 OLA Conference provided a variety of offerings for library staff working with children and those interested in doing so. Presentations ranged from award-winning ways to stretch the Children's Services Improvement Grants monies to the impact of Oregon's Education Act for the 21st Century on public libraries. There were also Summer Reading ideas, stories, and an author presentation.

A capacity crowd jammed the meeting room to learn the

answer to the question "Oregon's Readiness-to-Learn Benchmark: Are Public Libraries in the Picture?" Dr. Rebecca Servereide, Oregon Department of Education director of early childhood strategies, presented compelling national and state statistics about children's readiness to succeed in school. She explained that children who live in poverty have tremendous difficulty in the area of school readiness. Clarifying the connection between school success and a parent's stimulation of a child's emergent literacy skills, Dr. Servereide pointed out that parents experiencing financial stress often have limited time to spend with their preschoolers, and a drop in school readiness results. These same parents do not have the financial resources to enroll their children in preschool programs. In Oregon, Head Start and Oregon Prekindergarten Program, the state's program modeled on Head Start, serve only 29% of the eligible three- and four-year-olds. In one county, Tillamook, a full 84% of the eligible children are unserved.

Ellen Fader, public library consultant at the Oregon State Library, provided an overview of noteworthy Oregon and national programs that address the needs of the early care and education community — the agencies, professionals, and programs partnering with families to serve children from birth to eight. She exhorted libraries to reach out to others in their communities concerned with supporting families. Ideas to explore for enhanced library service include working with parents (especially fathers and teen parents); home care providers; and client families in Healthy Start, Even Start, Oregon Prekindergarten Program and Head Start (especially unserved families on the program's waiting list). Ellen also described the groundbreaking activities of a new LSCA-funded program in Oregon, Reading for a Healthy Start. The answer to the program title's question is that some Oregon public libraries are definitely in the picture of helping children develop the skills they need to succeed in school. Others need to be implementing ways to provide essential materials and services that assist families and caregivers. She reminded public libraries that funding these services can be accomplished through Children's Services Improvement Grants or by applying for other grants, such as Library Services and Construction Act funds and foundation grants. Ellen Fader welcomes calls from public libraries seeking assistance in improving service to youth.

Friday morning brought author Nicole Rubel to the Hilton with a slide show presentation and talk about her metamorphosis from a shy, non-verbal twin to a successful writer and speaker. Rubel provided the audience with insight into the processes involved in her writing. Powell's Books for Kids was on hand with copies of her newest book, *Cyrano the Bear*, giving the audience the chance to buy an autographed copy before it was available in the stores.

Oregon's Education Act for the 21st Century, CIM (Certificate of Initial Mastery), and CAM (Certificate of Advanced Mastery) are terms often heard but not always understood by those of us who are not teachers. Friday afternoon's session, *Oregon's Education Act for the 21st Century and Its Impact on Libraries*, provided insight from educators Dawn Billings, education specialist with the Oregon Department of Education, and Martha Stewart, Dayton High School librarian. Billings put the act into layman's terms that we could all comprehend and provided an excellent packet of materials for leisurely perusal. Those who could not attend but would like a packet may contact her at (503) 378-8004. Stewart, a children's librarian at Seattle Public Library for two years prior to the fifteen years that she has spent in Dayton schools, addressed the impact of the act on school library collections and reference service. Because the act serves to encourage stronger critical thinking skills in students, the types of research being done have changed dramatically from the days when an entire class had a report due on elephants. Students must now use multidisciplinary resources when researching a topic and approach it from angles not served by simple tables relating population and the type of food an elephant eats. Stewart spoke very highly of the staffs at McMinnville Public Library and Northup Library of Linfield College, to whom she often turns for assistance.

Kim Thompson, school/library liaison at Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, clearly explained the excellent program she administers, Assignment Alert/Homework Alert Center. An article in the fall OLA Quarterly will provide details of this program, which calls for close cooperation between schools and the public library. All three of these speakers served to alert the audience that Oregon's Education Act for the 21st Century will have a strong impact on public libraries and the types of service that students will need in the coming years.

Friday evening of the conference saw the debut of what will hopefully become a tradition for OLA, a story swap. Long a part of ALA conferences, the swap was a time for novice and experienced tellers to share their favorites. About twenty people took part in telling and listening to all kinds of tales, both traditional and personal, reaffirming how many talented people work in Oregon libraries.

The Children's Services Division Annual Breakfast gave all who attended the opportunity to honor the 1995 Evelyn Sibley Lampman Award recipient, Sandi Olmstead. The Lampman Award is given annually to an Oregon author or librarian for their contribution to children's literature and library services. Sandi, children's coordinator at Newberg Public Library, exemplifies the qualities inherent in a wonderful children's librarian: professional skills, boundless enthusiasm, sense of humor, and a terminal case of optimism. Congratulations, Sandi!

The Publishing Connection
From Idea to Article

by Barbara Valentine
Linfield College

In this very informative session, three panelists discussed practical ways to develop research ideas and get them published. Larry Oberg (Willamette University), an experienced writer and editor of the Research Notes section and member of the Editorial Board of College and Research Libraries, offered advice from the editor's perspective. Tim Klassen (University of Oregon), who recently published an article in *Reference Services Review,* recounted the process from inception of idea to acceptance of the completed manuscript. Finally, Anne Christie shared her experiences as a member of the Research and Writing Group sponsored by the Oregon State University Libraries.

Larry began by summarizing a panel discussion on the state of publishing in librarianship presented at the recent Association of College and Research Libraries conference (April 1995) in Pittsburgh. At this session, the panelists agreed that the rapid technological changes in the library field have probably contributed to the plethora of practice-related (i.e., "how I done it good") articles that seem currently to dominate professional literature. Larry noted that librarians must continue to conduct and publish substantive research or we risk losing the foundations of our profession. He suggested that administrators need to support the research interests of librarians with adequate time, recognition, and rewards as is the norm in other professions.

Larry concluded by noting seven reasons why editors reject manuscripts and suggested ways to improve the odds of getting a piece published:

- Content is not generalizable enough to serve as a model. Start with a general problem, describe the specific study, then return to the general problem.
- Poor writing and grammar. This is easy to fix. Reread and rewrite. Solicit input from a literate colleague.
- Poor scholarship. Make sure the citations in the bibliography are accurate.
- Poor fit with journal. Design the paper to fit a particular journal. Read the guidelines. Call the editor and discuss the idea.
- Poor statistical methodology. Make sure the study includes a hypothesis, explain the importance of your study, and make sure it is not too simplistic. Collaborate with colleagues and/or students to gather statistics.
- So What factor. Make sure the issues raised matter to the intended audience.
- Underanalysis of data and timid conclusions. Be explicit. Don't make the audience supply conclusions and connections among the data.

The ideas for Tim's article, entitled *Usenet as a Reference Tool,* originated from his experiences looking at usenet postings. He noticed that many people used the news-groups rather than the library to answer reference questions and thought a little research on this issue would make an interesting article. He started by evaluating the small number of articles in the library literature on newsgroups and decided he had something to contribute. He attributed his success in getting published to five key points:

- He attempted to add value to articles written on this subject before by including his experiences and observations in an instructional framework.
- He evaluated his audience, concluding the piece would have wide appeal among librarians in both the public and technical services areas.
- He wrote and rewrote the outline, soliciting colleague advice.
- A reader skilled in grammar and writing helped him write and rewrite the paper.
- He wrote the paper over a period of time in short sessions, starting each new session with intensive revision of what had been written before.

He concluded that the technological changes in the library field and elsewhere provide many new opportunities to develop and publish research and ideas of value to the profession.

Finally, Anne Christie shared her experiences in the professional Research and Writing Workshops organized by the Oregon State University Libraries. Although subject to the same scholarly pressures as other faculty members at OSU, librarians tend to lack experiences in the research culture of their peers who have written dissertations. To remedy this problem, the Libraries initiated the OSU Library Faculty Seminar Series where members could present papers and share ideas. Although successful, the series eventually became unsustainable because it was conducive only to completed works, with many librarians feeling uncomfortable sharing works in progress.

The Research and Writing Group arose from a need to provide a more informal environment for the collegial critique and brainstorming. A senior library faculty member moderates the "workshops," which draw a core group of librarians each month. Here librarians share, evaluate, and further develop ideas, manuscripts, works in progress, posters and other professional research. Works developed in the Research and Writing Group can then later be presented in the more formal Seminar Series. Together these programs offer librarians at OSU a rich source of collegial support and research development opportunities. **Q**