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# A Piece of the Pie:

## *Federal Funds to Improve Children's Library Services*

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Between federal fiscal years 1992 and 1996, the State Library awarded over a half million dollars of Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) funds for library projects to improve children's services, including four tentative awards for FFY 1996 that are contingent upon the federal appropriations process currently underway. Of 18 grant awards, 11 grants proposed projects that focused on children younger than five, ranging from infants through toddlers, to those in preschools. The remaining seven grants targeted library services to school-age children from elementary grades through young adults. These grants provide a variety of projects and activity examples that other Oregon public libraries can consider for replication. The grant activity reports, and particularly the LSCA evaluation reports of completed projects written by librarian peers in the state, contain suggestions that can benefit the planners of similar projects.

The grants reviewed for this article follow in chronological order. Each project's information includes the grantee, project title, amount awarded, and project description. Tips of universal interest from the grant reports and evaluations are listed last.

### 1992

Multnomah County Library, Hillsboro Public Library, Lake Oswego Public Library and Ledding Library of Milwaukie  
Opening the Preschool Door to Learning, Year 1  
Grant award: \$29,026

The report produced under this grant, *A State-wide Analysis of Public Library Service to Preschoolers, Parents, and Caregivers*, describes the public policy approach at the foundation of the grant's planning. Outcomes about children and how libraries can best encourage their emergent literacy skills was desired, but first, research about library services for young children, their parents and caregivers needed to be collected. Project staff surveyed libraries, parents, and educators statewide, and developed recommendations about what Oregon libraries should be doing to prevent illiteracy and encourage children to become readers. These recommendations continue to inform planners about children's library services on both a statewide and local level.

### Tips

- Partnerships, networks, and linkages to other education providers and community resources are critical

(six out of 13 recommendations in the report suggest this in different ways!)

- When developing a survey, involve a broad base of potential respondents in early planning, in order to create a vested interest, and stimulate participation and response.

Independence Public Library  
Spanish Language Readers  
Grant award: \$7,600

Approximately 20% of Independence's young children spoke only Spanish, were bilingual, or were limited in their English-speaking proficiency at the time of this grant application. In order to equally stress the importance of reading aloud and a print rich environment in the development of language skills and reading readiness for these children, the library implemented the Spanish Language Readers project. The grant hired Independence Public Library's first "children's librarian"—one who was Spanish-speaking. The librarian purchased materials and developed 20 storytime kits. An educator presented two programs for Spanish-speaking parents about developing reading skills. Bilingual story hours were initiated.

### Tips

- In seeking to build storytime attendance, abandon complicated "session" approaches. The consistency of a standard weekly storytime schedule helps.
- An essential method of publicizing to this target audience is word of mouth, particularly by trusted persons with ties to the community.

Salem Public Library  
Early Childhood Literacy Outreach  
Grant award: \$29,300

This project sought to conduct activities in reaction to studies that have shown that young children who are read to frequently become more successful students with better reading skills, at the same time recognizing that increasing number of young children are cared for by day care centers, due to more families with two working parents and/or single parents raising families. The way to provide quality storytime experiences for children who used to be brought by their parents to traditional library programs, is to reach out to these children at day care facilities. This project enabled a children's librarian to visit 28 day care facilities on a monthly basis to present high quality literature experiences to children and their care providers, and to register them for library cards that will be used to check out library books during the visit. Parents were encouraged to bring their children to the library via a newsletter sent home with each child. A workshop for care givers highlighted ways to develop reading readiness skills through the creative use of literature with children.

### Tips

- When circulating materials at home provider sites,

make the system work as simply as possible, and develop back-up methods for children to borrow materials even if they forget to bring their card.

- Be prepared to educate adults and day care providers that children need the experience of selecting their own materials.
- When planning components of service to reach parents of children in day care, strategize about activities that will overcome weak links of communication—the library and the parents have an indirect relationship in a typical day care situation.
- Finding a convenient time in which to hold training for providers takes effort.

### 1993

Multnomah County Library  
Toddler Time Video/Workshop Project  
Grant award: \$8,600

The extremely small number of public libraries providing service geared to toddlers as reported in the *Opening the Preschool Door to Learning* project motivated this grant application. As a result a toddler time training video, a guide to conducting toddler times, and workshops about planning and presenting toddler times were all made available free of charge to Oregon public libraries.

#### Tips

- A video production (or the production of other original work like a guidebook) may delay a grant project's original timeline—account for this in the timeline, particularly when an evaluation of the project hinges upon completion and distribution of the products.

Multnomah County Library, Hillsboro Public Library, Lake Oswego Public Library, and Ledding Library of Milwaukie  
*Opening the Preschool Door to Learning, Year 2*  
Grant award: \$9,904

The second year of this project provided an intensive day-long institute for Oregon children's services staff people, discussing the findings of the project research and its implications for public libraries in the state, including what Oregon libraries could be doing to encourage children to become readers.

Corvallis-Benton County Public Library  
Assignment Alert/Homework Alert! Centers  
Grant award: \$27,445

A firm groundwork and successful linkage with the Corvallis 509J school district was accomplished during 1991 with an LSCA grant that developed Assignment Alert packets, linked schools and the public library through a Teacher's Reserve Shelf at the public library, encouraged assignment notification, and instituted a feedback form notifying teachers of students unsuccessful attempts for materials on curriculum topics. Expanding the Assignment Alert program into the Philomath community, where a branch library was located, and to 4th and 5th grade stu-

dents in Corvallis, was the focus of the Assignment Alert/Homework Alert! project. Materials and equipment for Homework Alert! Centers located in the Corvallis headquarters library and the three branch libraries in Alsea, Monroe, and Philomath were added to the project. Volunteer Homework Mentors, older adults interested in working with and improving the skills of youth, were recruited and trained to assist students after school, evenings, and weekends. An Assignment Alert how-to manual was created for distribution to interested libraries. (Although all copies of the manual created with grant funds have been distributed, the library is willing to provide additional copies for the cost of copying and shipping; contact Kim Thompson at 503-757-6708.)

#### Tips

- If at all possible, grant projects for students should correspond to the school year.
- Hands-on training for homework mentors might include job-shadowing of reference librarians, and technology training.

Siuslaw Public Library District  
After School: Early Teen Outreach  
Grant award: \$29,050

Within a few years of opening, the attractive new facility of the Siuslaw Public Library District attracted more and more early teens. Many of these young people were from disadvantaged families residing in nearby low-income housing. Library services and the library collection needed to be developed to meet the needs of this population in a proactive manner. This demonstration project allowed the Library to develop a program to assist early teens to develop literacy, problem solving, and information skills. Senior volunteers provided mentoring relationships. The collection of young adult materials was significantly expanded. Early teens were involved in activities such as publishing a newsletter and quarterly field trips.

#### Tips

- Teen users appear to respond to a frequent and regular schedule of activities.
- Experience in the arts and programming is a beneficial background for a teen service program coordinator.
- Evaluating a teen program by survey may not be the most effective method.

Salem Public Library  
The Year of the Read-Aloud  
Grant award: \$17,787

The library sought to build on research that reading aloud to children has been shown to help them succeed in school, communicate more successfully, improve vocabulary, and stimulate creativity. Communicating the benefits of reading aloud to children over the age of seven or eight years was a particular focus in this attempt to send staff into every classroom in the Salem-Keizer school district to

begin reading aloud age-appropriate chapter books. The books were then left with the teacher to finish. Graded booklists and information about the benefits of reading aloud to children were shared with the teachers. 804 classrooms were eventually reached.

#### Tips

- Incorporating the read-aloud activities into curriculum may be easier at the beginning of the school year, particularly at the high school level.
- A higher rate of participation may be guaranteed if the readers are given a chance to make a personal contact with the teacher before the read aloud session.

#### 1994

Multnomah County Library

Books 2 U—Volunteer Outreach to the Public Schools

Grant award: \$51,733

Multnomah County Library Youth Services staff have long been aware that there are many children in Multnomah County's schools not being reached with the message of library usage. Too many, because of economic or transportation problems, are not visiting and using the library. In fact, there are too many who are not reading for pleasure. A cadre of trained volunteers has begun to visit each classroom in the culturally and economically diverse Franklin Cluster of Portland Public Schools to booktalk and circulate books with lots of child appeal, as well as register children to use the library and encourage them to take part in the library's Summer Reading Program. The third through fifth grades have been targeted for the first year of the program because these are the grades in which many children lose their motivation to read and must be "re-inspired." Reaching the many children for whom English is a second language is a part of the project's plan.

#### 1995

Multnomah County Library

Born to Read

Grant award: \$32,312

Partnering with existing parenting programs, the county health department, and a university child and family studies program, the library is beginning to implement a pilot literacy program for at-risk expectant parents. A video about establishing a pattern of lifelong learning will be developed, and trained interns will encourage parents to begin reading to their infants and using the library. Participants will be drawn into their local library through periodic incentives. The American Library Association has given Multnomah County Library permission to be a Born To Read library.

Clackamas County Library

Reading for a Healthy Start

Grant award: \$42,300

This project adds a family literacy and library component to five pilot Healthy Start projects serving families in eight

counties. Healthy Start projects are funded by the Oregon Commission on Families and Children to assist all first-birth families in giving their newborn children a "healthy start" in life. The grant will provide emergent literacy training and library orientation for Healthy Start workers who do home visits; establish home libraries for families; and provide home delivery of library kits on parenting topics, funds to print library marketing tools (brochures/bookmarks) and incentives for those attending library programs.

Multnomah County Library

Books 2 U, Year 2: Volunteer Outreach to the Public Schools

Grant award: \$34,497

The second year of this project will extend the outreach activities of a cadre of highly-literate, well-trained volunteers into another sector of Multnomah County schools, to talk about books and the library, for the purpose of motivating students to become recreational readers and public library users.

Multnomah County Library

Families Reading Together

Grant award: \$40,664

This family literacy project has begun developing a program for lower-income and/or limited English-speaking families to introduce parents to resources that will enhance their literacy and parenting skills, at the same time that their children are introduced to activities that will increase their reading readiness skills, and familiarity with libraries. The grant also seeks to establish and improve relations between the public library and at-risk, low-economic-level, and/or limited English speaking communities, and the organizations that serve them.

#### Tips

- A one-to-one approach with the adults in family literacy projects is needed at first while the adults develop a commitment to their own learning. Group projects can be successful as a later activity.

Cedar Mill Community Library, Tigard Public Library, Hillsboro Public Library

Providing for the Providers

Grant award: \$23,389

This project has begun developing a collection of video materials, and planning outreach activities to promote the collection to childcare providers and early childhood educators. The grant attempts to enhance the ability of the providers to increase children's self-esteem, pre-literacy, and reading readiness.

#### Tips

- While childcare providers are enthusiastic about library cooperative projects, obtaining their input in structured meetings appears problematic.

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1996

Multnomah County Library  
Families Reading Together, Year 2  
Grant award: \$69,999

The second year of this family literacy project will employ a full-time project coordinator, and partner with Head Start, to continue activities designed to attract families with low levels of literacy to library programs. The goal of the programs is to make the public library accessible, and develop skills that will assist the family members (parents and children together) in becoming lifelong readers and library users.

Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, Corvallis 509J  
School District

Kids Need Libraries: Inventing a New Model of  
School/Public Library Collaboration  
Grant award: \$52,200

This project will develop a collaborative model of provision of library service to students by demonstrating that a school library can be administered by a public library. To ensure that students gain the information access skills they will need in the future, human and financial resources will be maximized through two main efforts: 1) Studying the school district's current library services and developing an action plan by a task force of public library and school district personnel; 2) Piloting a collaborative model of library service at Corvallis High School. This model will provide valuable data and experience for replication in other district schools and elsewhere.

Siuslaw Public Library District  
Science Alive!  
Grant award: \$21,500

This project will forge a broad partnership of educational and scientific institutions to stimulate interest in the natural sciences through sponsorship of programs and science "camps" for youth, establishment of core collections of science materials for the library and the participating educational facilities, and development of activities manu-

als to supplement the collections. This project will target children in grades K-7 in the Siuslaw Public Library District and boys ages 13-21 at a youth correctional facility. Many of the students who will be served by this project come from economically and educationally disadvantaged families who are unable to take advantage of the library district's natural resources.

Klamath County Library  
Klamath Kids Story-Van  
Grant award: \$23,030

This project, developed through discussions with child advocacy agencies, will establish an outreach program to home child care centers using a refurbished book van, deliver children's books and programs at the centers, and develop family and parent programs at the library emphasizing family literacy skills. An emphasis will be placed on developing a multicultural collection of children's books for sharing and check-out at the sites. The grant will assist with funding a Library Assistant III position who will manage the collection development and processing, and will do much of the actual outreach.

If the FFY 1996 funds for LSCA are appropriated, the national and Oregon library communities are looking at the last year of LSCA as we know it today. There are promising signs that the new federal library grant program that will result from bills currently under consideration in the House and the Senate will permit equally as exciting, worthy, and productive children's library service improvement projects as the 18 described here. All of the grant applications, reports, and evaluations for the projects summarized above can be requested from Val Vogt, Administrative Specialist in Library Development at the State Library. There are still copies of *Opening the Preschool Door to Learning* available for distribution. Libraries interested in applying for a federally funded grant to improve youth services in the next grant cycle (project proposals due December 15, 1995) can request the application packet from Val Vogt, 378-2112 extension 222. **Q**