
Volume 2
Number 3
*The Inner Workings of the Association (Fall
1996)*

July 2014

The past year: A focus on intellectual freedom

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Recommended Citation

Carver, D. (2014). The past year: A focus on intellectual freedom. *OLA Quarterly*, 2(3), 3+. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1415>

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

The Past Year:

A Focus on Intellectual Freedom

Deb Carver

Knight Library

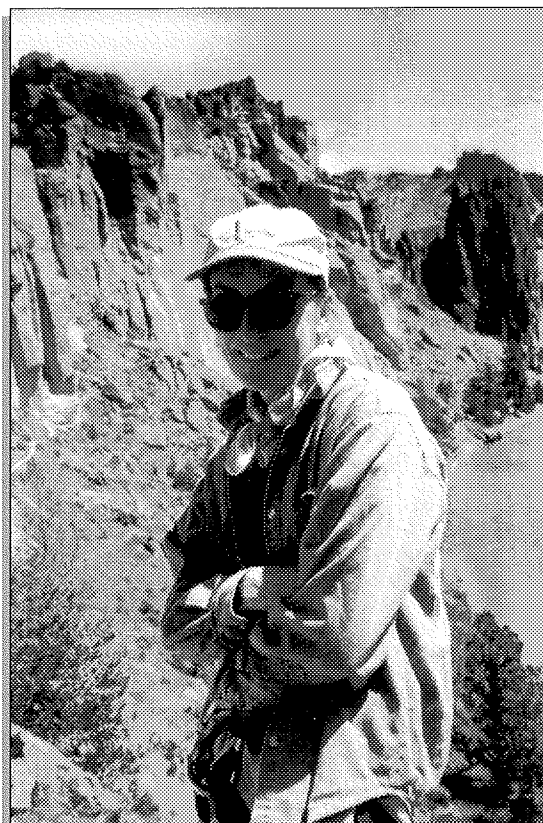
University of Oregon

Several challenges and accomplishments have marked the Oregon Library Association's past year. Some trial balloons were released early in the year, and looking back on those experiments, we see new patterns and practices that may emerge and strengthen the organization.

The first experiment was to adopt a presidential theme. In a joint meeting of the Legislative Committee and the Intellectual Freedom Committee, it became obvious that the political climate in this state would continue to shake the foundations of intellectual freedom. OLA needed to coordinate its efforts to make sure it was covering all issues surrounding these principles. The suggestion was made to make "Intellectual Freedom—Liberties and Liabilities" the president's theme. Selecting a theme had many advantages. It gave the organization a focus for the year. It helped to heighten members' awareness of the importance of intellectual freedom and how easily these freedoms can erode if we take them for granted. The theme prompted several educational discussions regarding access to electronic information and the particular concerns associated with the non-regulated Internet. It gave the Conference Committee ideas for programs, and it created a focal point for the Public Relations Committee. A theme may not be necessary every year, but OLA now has a precedent that may help future president's coordinate efforts around a critical issue.

1995-96 was a transition year for the organization's publications. Communication is one of the key elements of an effective association. Success means that members receive information that is useful, educational, timely, and cost-efficient. The Publication Committee managed this transition year extremely well. The *OLA Quarterly* became established as a journal of substantive discussion on major issues such as library facilities and intellectual freedom. In addition to the Quarterly, the *OLA Hotline* was issued twice monthly, bringing members up-to-date news on library events across the state. Perhaps the most significant change in the publications was the development of OLA's homepage by committee member Tim Klassen. The homepage will change the way we think about communication and will open up new avenues for marketing and recruitment. In the coming year, technology will give us the opportunity to make further improvements to the way we communicate with members, and it will reduce the costs associated with printing and distribution.

The Legislation Committee made significant changes this year in the way the political agenda is set. It



Deb Carver, OLA past president

established long-term goals that will provide the organization with a clear sense of our legislative mission during the next several years. Instead of advocating dispersing our interests in several directions, the committee urged the membership to zero in on one significant improvement this year: increase the per capita spending for children in libraries throughout Oregon. Beyond this major legislative goal, the committee helped to organize an aggressive strategy for the pre- and post-election periods. Thoughtful position papers on several ballot measures were developed and distributed to the different library regions in the state.

Two special committees were established to investigate OLA's role in information technology and preservation. In the area of preservation, we learned that there are many efforts that OLA could sponsor that would strengthen the state's ability to maintain its collections for future generations of library users. Education, coordination, disaster-planning, facility improvements, security, and more, can all be enhanced if OLA were to play a stronger role in preservation. Under the leadership of Jey Wann and Normandy Helmer, the committee made significant progress in one year and will continue to gather information in the coming months.

Finally, the organization's conferences continue to draw large numbers of library employees, educa-

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the goal of increasing understanding of current social problems and issues

- To act as a stimulus to the association and its various units in making libraries more responsive to current social needs
- To present programs, arrange exhibits, and carry out other appropriate activities consistent with its other goals

Jos Anemaet of Oregon State University's Valley Library is chair of SRRT.

Technical Services Round Table (TSRT)

TSRT's general objective is to provide a framework for information sharing, continuing education, and moral support for library workers currently engaged in technical services activities. Specifically, the group has three aims:

- To provide for the exchange of ideas on technical services and automation processes, systems, and policies
- To provide a medium for the exploration of new ideas and technologies
- To foster cooperation among all Oregon libraries in the areas of technical services and automation and to increase an awareness in the library community of the roles of technical and automation services.

TSRT is chaired by Cherie Rusk, Information Services Department, at Oregon State University's Valley Library. ☐

The Year Ahead

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and committees cover areas and interests throughout the library landscape, whether it be reference, support staff, outreach, public relations, or technical services. After goals and objectives are set and work is done, the resulting benefits extend to all. Having input and assistance from a larger and a more diverse membership can only help make the organization stronger and more successful.

While achieving all the goals set forth above will not be easy, it will be rewarding to know that we gave it our best shot. If we receive a few whacks on the side of the head during the course of the year, we'll just shrug them off. What the hell, we'll just call them "knowledge bumps!" ☐

Past Year

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tors, and vendors. This past year, OLA tried another experiment with the annual conference. The annual event was planned to take advantage of the Public Library Association's decision to meet in Portland at the same time as OLA. Rather than reschedule OLA, the Executive Board encouraged the Conference Committee to use its creative energy to organize a completely different conference. The planning was complicated, and there was plenty of uncharted territory to explore. The board was prepared for a "non-profit" year because of uncertainties regarding costs and attendance. But the OLA Conference turned out to be a bigger success than anyone had anticipated. Under the leadership of Kit Dusky, the committee emerged triumphant. The lessons learned from this experiment will help OLA deal with future planning challenges and unexpected scheduling problems.

OLA is an exceptionally strong organization with a long history of success. This past year we were able to add to that list of accomplishments through good planning, creative initiative, hard work, and dedication to the principles behind library service. Being OLA president may not be at the top of everyone's to-do list, but I urge our members to consider the possibility in a new light. It is a chance to associate with a winning team of people, to take on important challenges that affect libraries throughout the state, and to learn a great deal from informed colleagues. The benefits outweigh any costs. ☐

Kappy

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seen continuing education and training opportunities become increasingly available.

Kappy Eaton's professional life is an example of the difference one committed individual can make to any endeavor in which she believes. It is as good an answer as any to the OLA member who questions the value of getting involved. ☐