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## LSSRT - Wind on the Buffalo grass

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# LSSRT — Wind On The Buffalo Grass?

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“A people without history, is like wind on the buffalo grass.” When I was in the sixth grade, I had a teacher who had that phrase written above the bulletin board. Certainly, I cannot remember who he was quoting, and at the time I thought it was the silliest quotation I had ever seen. Come to think of it, I do not even remember if I actually understood what a quote was back then.

As time has passed, the meaning of this quotation has become much clearer to me. We need to have a history, need to know what happened before or we cannot begin to improve upon the past, learn from it, and be assured of creating a better future. It is also clear to me from this quote that we need to create a record of our previous experiences, like bookmarks, or the people and events of the past will disappear without a trace, “like wind on the buffalo grass,” making it impossible for others to learn from our experiences. I certainly never thought of this concept in the sixth grade and little did I know that I would work in a library, at an institution of higher learning, where one of our major goals is assisting research and providing the tools for others to learn from access to those all important bookmarks.

Those of us involved in the OLA’s Library Support Staff Roundtable (LSSRT) have learned a great deal through our historic events and we would like to share those experiences with you.

LSSRT became an official roundtable in January 1992. The formation of this roundtable started after Donetta Sheffold attended the New Jersey Association of Library Assistants during the summer of 1991. This would not have been possible without the vision and support of Melvin R. George, library director of Oregon State University Libraries. As the seed grew into a vision of what might be possible in Oregon, so did the enthusiasm of others within the state. After preparing the petition, drafting bylaws and a presentation to the OLA Executive Board for their approval of the roundtable, LSSRT realized their first historical event — the formation of LSSRT as an official roundtable within OLA.

LSSRT’s first business meeting was held at the joint OLA/WLA conference in April 1992, just three months after becoming an official roundtable.

Approximately 50 individuals from Oregon and Washington attended the meeting. The Washington Association of Library Employees (WALE, Washington’s support staff organization) had already been solidly in place for a few years. WALE’s chair, Ruth Poynter, was the speaker at this first meeting. She spoke about the organization’s history and the conferences they were sponsoring. This first meeting also brought LSSRT its first elected chair, Donetta Sheffold, and the first vice-chair, chair-elect, Jey Wann. WALE and LSSRT sponsored a session at this joint conference entitled, *Creativity Within the System—A Roundtable Discussion for Support Staff*. At this session, attendees exchanged ideas on processes, systems, and policies to increase awareness of the various roles support staff hold in the library community.

Sheffold and Wann had a big job ahead in trying to build a membership base for LSSRT. They worked together to create a vision and goals for this new organization, along with a plan to establish a membership base and publicize LSSRT. One of the ways they decided to reach the potential membership was through traveling to libraries around the state speaking to support staff about their vision for LSSRT in developing a communication network among support staff in all libraries and informing them of LSSRT’s sponsorship of workshops, OLA pre-conferences and eventually an LSSRT annual conference. Both Sheffold and Wann worked together to design, produce, and distribute the first LSSRT membership directory. Advertisement and getting the word out was key, so great effort was made to ensure an article in each issue of *Oregon Library News* which was distributed each month.

To increase visibility and provide programs of interest to support staff, LSSRT sponsored its first pre-conference workshop entitled, *More Than the Sum of Its Parts, Building the Library Team*, at the OLA annual conference in Portland. In 1994, when Wann took the reins as chair and Donna Ainslie as vice-chair, LSSRT sponsored a second OLA pre-conference entitled, *Doing the Right Thing: Ethics and Libraries*. The event was well attended and well received. So began an annual tradition of LSSRT pre-conferences.

Also at the 1994 OLA Conference we experienced for the first time the award of a scholarship to a support staff member to attend the OLA annual conference by OLA’s Honors, Awards and Scholarship (HAS) Committee. The first support staff person to receive the HAS scholarship was Anna Beauchamp, interlibrary loan coordinator at Southern Oregon State College.

In September of 1994, Ainslie began her year as chair and Deborah Cook was elected vice-chair. Under their leadership planning for the first LSSRT

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## LSSRT

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conference was carried forward by a dedicated group of nine LSSRT members. The first annual LSSRT conference was held in July 1995 with a total attendance of 275. Since LSSRT's official membership base at that time was 65, we knew there was an untapped resource of library support staffers. The conference evaluations were glowing with comments ranging from, "I enjoyed this conference so much that I plan to join OLA. I now feel I have a part in the organization," to "It was great to meet so many people from the public and academic libraries and learn of their situations."


From this experience we learned that if you give people what they need, want, and can afford, they will attend. Even with holding registration fees down to \$40 we demonstrated we could create a cash reserve for future LSSRT conferences and activities.

Under Ainslie's tenure, LSSRT began the tradition of sponsoring *Soaring to Excellence* teleconferences at different sites around the state. LSSRT charged a small fee to those attending and thus placed a little more money into its account toward future continuing education opportunities for support staff.

Cook became LSSRT chair in 1995. In 1996, Katherine Stevens became chair of LSSRT, assisted by Maresa Kirk, chair-elect. They are working hard to prepare for the third annual LSSRT conference on July 18, 1997.


LSSRT has benefited from OLA's support and from the support of the library directors who have encouraged each of the LSSRT officers, both past and present. We would like to acknowledge these directors who assisted us with our vision: Melvin George (retired), OSU; Jim Schepcke, the State Library of Oregon; Carole Dickerson, Lake Oswego Public Library; Sue Burkholder, SOSC; Barbara Swanson, PCC; and Larry Oberg, Willamette University. There are a couple of other people we want to acknowledge: Maureen Sloan, OLA president in 1992, who gave guidance and assisted Sheffold through the establishment of LSSRT with the finer points of OLA and their requirements, and Deborah Jacobs, OLA president in 1993, who was extremely supportive of our cause from the beginning.

As for the future of LSSRT, we all have high hopes that we can build on the knowledge and expertise we have gained from not only knowing about our

LSSRT history but living it! If anyone is interested in not only sharing our history but helping shape it, please contact Katherine Stevens, Maresa Kirk, Deborah Cook, Donna Ainslie, Jey Wann, Donetta Sheffold, or any one of many other people involved in planning LSSRT's future. Instead of being swept back and forth as the buffalo grass, without a trace of change or progress being seen after it leaves—let's be like others before us who have let the winds of time teach them to become wiser and stronger as we create our future and our history! 

## Crabs

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My favorite reference questions are those that involve identifying strange creatures that fishermen bring up in their nets. At these times, I am reminded of how strange and wonderful life is and of what a mysterious and beautiful world we live in. I have seen bizarre creatures from the ocean depths and stunning coral that wasn't supposed to live off the Oregon coast. And there are occasional benefits outside the library. I have stroked the back of an infant harbor porpoise separated from its mother shortly after birth, cast up on the beach, and brought to the center. As I touched him, he snorted and blew; I could feel the wildness of him, and I realized that it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, a great gift. It has all been a great gift. 

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