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## Seeking enlightenment in a library campaign

Michael K. Gaston  
*Deschutes County Library*

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Most library leaders get involved in the election process for all the wrong reasons. Improving library service is well and good, but all this focus on the community's need for access to information and great literature is not a compelling argument for today's library leaders. I imagine that many more measures would be on the ballot if library leaders were generally aware of all the intrinsic benefits of conducting a campaign.

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## Seeking Enlightenment in a Library Campaign

by Michael K. Gaston  
Director  
Deschutes County Library

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The best reason to get involved in a library campaign is that it's fun. Let's face it, we all want a little zest in our lives. I know of no better way to infuse energy into a library director's iron poor blood than to trot the justification for the entire program onto a ballot, where it can be debated by friend and foe alike.

If you have a sensitive adrenal gland, the fight and flight reaction to an election can do wonders for your senses. Suddenly, you find that you can scan the morning newspaper at remarkable speeds to detect editorials, letters, and articles on library related issues. At restaurants you routinely follow conversations that mention public libraries at even the most distant tables.

Mental faculties are also enhanced during an election campaign. My wife has complimented me more than once for my ability to carry on a conversation even as I focus my thoughts on a completely different subject. We are currently working to improve my responses to multiple choice questions where "yes" does not seem to be particularly apropos. Multitasking seems to be an achievable goal.

Exercise and eating patterns also improve when you are on the ballot. My theory is that the body emits some type of enzyme that stimulates interest in wine, chocolate, and any kind of pastry that is topped by roasted pecans. Some biological response rooted in our climb up the evolutionary ladder takes control. Rather than exercise, we sip wine and peruse life issues. These new behaviors are so effective that most library leaders experience an actual weight gain during an election. This provides the added benefit of justifying new clothes purchases, which of course helps the economy.

If you are into spiritual growth, you really should put down that copy of *Ram Dass* and get involved in a library election. Campaigns open a variety of doors to the innermost chambers of the soul. Most library leaders report an almost out-of-body experience that is often described as a roller coaster ride though the range of human emotions. One moment you float on

a cloud of optimism, the next you plunge down into a sea of despair and self-doubt. Self-sacrifice, loyalty, fear, and even anger will loom throughout the campaign. Talk about getting in touch with your emotions!

Perhaps the best reason for initiating a campaign to restore library funding is that you learn so many great life lessons. Here are some of my favorite Election-Isms:

*Great pleasure can be taken from small victories.* This Ism refers to sense of accomplishment that can be derived from folding a solicitation letter crisply. Campaigns offer many opportunities for this type of self-actualization.

*Life isn't all that complicated — just connect the dots.* Of course, if you have enough dots, it still looks complicated.

And my very favorite:

*If the Sun goes nova, enjoy the view.*  
No explanation required.

Library advocacy is fun, it's healthy, and it's enlightening. And, as Jim Scheppke is fond of pointing out, nearly every library measure in Oregon passes. I urge one and all to take advantage of the opportunities for self-growth provided by Oregon's unique taxing structure. Start your planning process today to place a measure on the next ballot.

*Michael Gaston is the director of the Deschutes County Library. He is currently working on a proposal to form a library district. This is Michael's ninth election in the past 15 years. ☐*

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