
Volume 9
Number 4
*Special Double Issue: Revisiting the Vision
(Spring 2004)*

July 2014

The View From a Cozy Library on the Coast of Oregon

Wyma Rogers
Newport Public Library

Recommended Citation

Rogers, W. (2014). The View From a Cozy Library on the Coast of Oregon. *OLA Quarterly*, 9(4), 26-28.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1668>

© 2014 by the author(s).

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

The View from a Cozy Library on the Coast of Oregon

by Wyma Jane Rogers
Director
Newport Public Library

*Even the most misfitting child
Who's chanced upon the library's worth,
Sits with the genius of the Earth
And turns the key to the whole world.*

I love the last verse of Ted Hughes' poem, *Hear it Again*. It eloquently affirms what I believe and what I value in libraries. As the Vision 2010 Committee gathered around a table in 1999 to prognosticate the health of libraries in the year 2010 it seemed that each of us understood we were on a mission. We had to create a plan that would not just improve libraries in Oregon, but save them. The "Call to

Action" was prefaced by the notion that we must accomplish the list of tasks in order to *survive* as the places where a human hand reaches out and helps a child turn that key to the whole world.

To examine the "Call to Action" four years later in the context of this small library on the coast, I checked Newport Public Library's mission statement for relevance. It

includes the phrases "personalized service," "diverse and popular materials," and "foster children's learning." Achieving the goals in the "Call to Action," *Vision 2010* can further our goals for library service, but will the library be saved?

Statewide card

Encouraged by the University of Oregon's leap forward to offer service to residents statewide, we gathered political support to do the same in Newport. We were poised to open our library to visitors from all over Oregon, when we found ourselves in contract negotiations to determine payment for service to District residents. How could we enact library service to all while we were negotiating a fee for service? This is the knot we must untie so we can offer a statewide card. And in Newport as in Oregon, we must do it while people still care.

E-reference

We participated in the pilot project for statewide virtual reference, *Answerland*, and learned a great deal, including that there is a legitimate need for e-reference. However, we think a regional virtual service might be more useful to patrons. Enough users of the service asked our staff questions about their local libraries that we plan to provide e-reference locally, and ultimately hope to share the service and task within our consortium, the Coastal Resource Sharing Network.

Statewide databases

Although making the databases available is a good first step, it should be followed by local partnering with the schools so that students K-12 get guidance in using the information. In Newport, we cannot depend on school personnel to teach students how to use the databases. Budget cuts have caused most libraries and computer resource centers in Lincoln County schools to be closed more hours than they are open.

Through our consortium we subscribe to several databases. To present an alternative to Googling through the Internet, Newport reference librarians teach classes in how to use the databases. These small classes are popular with adults, but we have not yet found the carrot that will attract students to participate in them. We experimented with Homework Helper classes, but they didn't fly. Once school is over for the day, the kids just want to play. We expect the local high school principal to be appointed to the Library Board this month. Already, without coaxing, he has brought forward this same issue. We hope in the next year to progress in marketing the databases to students.

Statewide catalog

Simultaneously searching a choice of library catalogs may be more useful to the public than searching a statewide catalog. Too many false drops can be more discouraging than no access at all. A long list of



In Rita Dove's poem, "The First Book," she says of opening a book for the first time "it's not like it's the end of the world—just the world as you think you know it."



hits, most of them nowhere near what was requested, could leave patrons feeling that they are incapable of using the catalog, or worse, that the library is inadequate to serve them.

That's something like the way I felt talking to Julie, the Amtrak Robot. When I told her I wanted to go from San Diego to Los Angeles, she sent me to Boston. I cleared my throat, tried again and got a ticket to Lawrence, Kansas. A la Dave Barry, I want to assure you I'm not making this up. Julie Robot had too many options and lacked the ability to discern among them, dooming both of us to failure.

Library users are a lot smarter than Julie, but they may not think like librarians. Statewide access to all library catalogs will be a wonderful tool so long as we design it for a mix of users and build in the ability to choose a smaller universe.

Recruiting for diversity

Newport has a culturally diverse population, and the majority of our library staff is white and over 50. We need to add younger staff and some who speak Spanish. We have a few opportunities for hiring and have to choose among many needs. Last year we hired a new young adult assistant, at the same time lowering the average age of library staff.

We recently added a bilingual storyteller, paid by the hour with Foundation funds. Staff chose someone who showed promise of the basic ability to enact a story for children, and trained her. She has been successful, and the bilingual story program is thriving. When staff hours become available, we hope to build, a few hours at a time, a Spanish-speaking position.

Statewide network

The Coastal Resource Sharing Network benefited from the SOEN rate and now has T-1 lines to all public library buildings in Lincoln and Tillamook Counties, greatly improving catalog access and incorporating Internet for all.

Serve every child

When all but two school librarians in Lincoln County were cut from the budget two years ago, we lost our partners in the goal to serve every child. Our best efforts to regroup involve the Summer Reading Program and a Young Adult Advisory Committee. The Youth Services Librarian has worked with the Title I reading class teachers to include their students in the Summer Reading Program activities. Children who need help with reading register for the Summer Reading Program and attend the activities. They study at the library with tutors after the weekly Summer Reading programs. This year we extended cooperation to three daycare centers.

Through a Trust Management Grant and the Young Adult Assistant, an advisory committee made up of middle and high school students has revamped the young adult corner, dubbing it the "Youth Domain," helped select new materials, and participated in Friday night Mystery at the Library events. We may have lost ground, but through staff efforts and community partnerships we are again moving toward serving every child.

Survey

I asked library staff and members of the Foundation board to take five minutes to answer a survey about the future of the library. I am pleased to report that all 18 respondents believe that Newport Public Library has a future. Among new services and changes that they predicted were items very much like the *Vision 2010* goals: statewide card, diversity in staffing and programs, and many services that implied high-speed equipment, lines, and wireless technology. The number one service to keep was children's storytelling. It's gratifying to see the merging of local vision with statewide action plans.


Conclusion

A recent issue of *Library Futures Quarterly* projects that "Each library will develop



according to a unique population ... [with] more emphasis on local character and needs.” Newport Public Library is well positioned to build on the local character of the library and Newport’s unique population. While implementing new services, we will keep what we do best. Personalized service will trump buying another computer. Staff will continue to learn and grow with the library and bring excellent service to the public. We will use

what we have and who we are to create and insure the future.

In Rita Dove’s poem *The First Book*, she says of opening a book for the first time, “it’s not like it’s the end of the world—just the world as you think you know it.” This is why libraries are worth saving. In libraries our task is to make it easy for all to open those doors, one after another, to worlds that alter lives, inform vision, and inspire change in the universe. 

Progress Along the Road

Continued from page 11

Oregon Statewide Database Licensing Program, 2003. <http://www.osl.state.or.us/home/libdev/osdlp/index.html>

Schepke J., 1995. Update on the Oregon Information Highway: Oh, What Tangled Webs We Weave. *OLA Quarterly* 1(1): 7. <http://www.olaweb.org/quarterly/quar1-1/schepke.shtml>

Senate Interim Task Force on Library Cooperation, 2003. Final Report http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/commsrvs/librarycooperation_report_final.pdf

Serving Every Child

Continued from page 20

Board also has granted LSTA funds to the Salem Public Library for some public opinion survey work that will assist them in planning for a library district election this November. A new Salem area library district would serve an estimated 44,000 unserved children and adults in Marion and Polk counties, in addition to the City of Salem residents who are already served.

I am encouraged that the Oregon library community’s commitment to “serve every child” is higher than I have ever seen it in my 18 years at the State Library. It’s not

just librarians, but hundreds of dedicated citizens, in organizations like the Lane Library League, the Linn Library League, the Friends of the Fossil Public Library, and “Yes for Libraries” in the Salem area, who are devoted to achieving this goal.

As the State Library looks ahead to our centennial in 2005, I can think of no better commemoration than to be on our way to finally finishing the work that began 100 years ago, a goal that we wholeheartedly share with the Oregon Library Association. 