

# OLAQ

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# OLA Quarterly



## The Best of OLAQ

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A Look at Reference Service at a Small Library

Internet Filtering and Individual Choice

The Heart of a Librarian

The Sharing Heart

Some Examples of Oregon Libraries' Responses to September 11

Deep Change—Diversity at Its Simplest

Winter 2004

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## The Best of OLAQ

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Librarians and Laughter*

Summer 2005

*This issue cancelled  
due to budget issues.*



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# OLA Quarterly Publication Schedule 2005

The *OLA Quarterly* is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association. Beginning with volume 3, number 4 the *Quarterly* is indexed in Library Literature. Each issue of the *OLA Quarterly* is developed by a guest editor(s), on a topic decided by the Publications Committee. To suggest future topics for the *Quarterly*, or to volunteer/nominate a Guest Editor, please click on the appropriate e-mail link.

Vol./No.	Theme	Deadline	Pub. Date	Guest Editor
Vol 11 • No 1 Spring 2005	<i>Humor us: Librarians and Laughter</i>	January 15, 2005	March 15, 2005	Barbara Butler Oregon Institute of Marine Biology
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# Best of ...

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Any time passionate and articulate librarians have the opportunity to write about libraries and librarianship it is a “best of” moment for the profession. The winter issue of the *OLA Quarterly* is a celebration of just such authors and their writings in a “best of” compilation of *Quarterly* articles.

As guest editor, I asked *OLAQ* readers to submit nominations for memorable articles from the past 9 years—articles that left an impression; clearly reflected feelings, visions and desires; made readers laugh or gave them a new and interesting perspective on a subject.

As the suggestions came in there was clearly a thread that linked all the nominees—passion. Passion for the profession and all it represents.

In submitting Susan Gilmont’s *Do Crabs Have Favorite Colors?* article, one respondent shared “I remember that when she (Susan) read it as a

staff meeting presentation here at The Valley Library (then Kerr Library) sometime before it was published she got a standing ovation, probably the only one I’ve ever seen at a staff meeting.” Susan’s honesty in presenting her experiences vividly portrays the profession that she has found to be a “great gift.”

Candace Morgan, a true champion for intellectual freedom, shared her erudite views on choice and access during the tumultuous times when the Internet was still in its infancy in public libraries. Her views (particularly her conclusion) written in 1998, offer sound advice still compelling today.

Rebecca Cohen and Steven Engelfried opened their hearts to us in the Fall 1999 *Heart of a Librarian* issue. Both Rebecca and Steven shared their personal journeys and depth of commitment to the profession. Their stories stirred many

readers’ recollections of their individual paths to librarianship.

The events of 9/11 left all of us unsettled both personally and professionally. Fred Reenstjerna’s observations demonstrated how Oregon libraries responded in the wake of national tragedy. Through the examples Fred cites we share what he calls “an impressive testimonial to the responsiveness of Oregon librarians to their communities’ needs.”

Finally, in Sandra Rios Balderrama’s stirring commentary, *Deep Change—Diversity at Its Simplest* she eloquently inspires us to understand and embrace the many facets of diversity. She calls us to create our own definition of diversity—one that is meaningful personally, one that will guide us in our lives and our work.

This issue celebrates librarians sharing the best of their profession and the best of themselves. Please join me in applauding their contributions.

—Pam North, *Guest Editor*  
Sherwood Public Library



OLAQ

# Do Crabs Have Favorite Colors?

## A Look at Reference Service at a Small Library

by Susan R. Gilmont

Technician III  
Guin Library  
Hatfield Marine Science Center



*Over the past quarter of a century, vast numbers of support staff have been pressed into service ... at reference desks across the country. ... What remains to be debated and resolved, in my opinion, is not whether paraprofessionals should or should not be used at the reference desk—the troops have voted with their feet on that one—but rather how they may best be utilized and what can be done to assure the conditions necessary for their success.*

—Larry R. Oberg

**W**ith these words, Larry Oberg raises a clear challenge to all of us who care about the role of paraprofessionals at the reference desk. I'd like to talk about my experiences doing reference work at a small, specialized academic library. I believe that staff members at small libraries grow in ways that their peers at larger institutions do not simply because they have nobody to fall back on. My experiences describe one approach to using paraprofessionals, and I hope these observations will be useful to others.

### Background

I'd like to begin by explaining my situation. I'm a Library Technician III at the Guin

Library at the Hatfield Marine Science Center on the central Oregon coast. The Guin Library is Oregon State University's only branch library. The main and branch libraries are 56 miles apart, a degree of separation common for marine libraries. Our library is small but active. We have 2.5 FTE permanent staff and about .5 FTE student workers. Our collection is small, around 28,000 volumes with about 300 active serial subscriptions. The Guin Library serves Oregon State University staff and students, federal and state agencies located at the center, and the nearby Oregon Coast Aquarium. Our core constituency is diverse but primarily concerned with marine science issues.

I came to the Guin Library seven years ago, after more than nine years of experience in the serials department at our main library, the William Jasper Kerr Library in Corvallis. I'm the interlibrary loan clerk, the serials control clerk and the binding clerk. I assist in supervising circulation and shelving. Before we added a half-time technician, I also did the accounting and resource sharing with our main library. I have always had plenty to do without helping with reference, but I found myself doing it.

### The Trials

At first, I only dealt with reference questions when the librarian was gone. And she was gone a lot. During the first six months, she was gone for six weeks. As the only other staff person, I was responsible for "keeping things going in her absence." I was unaware that she was nearing the end of a period of remission from cancer and was packing the experiences of a lifetime into the time she had left. After my first six months, we picked up a temporary half-time librarian, which was a blessing because the cancer came back, and the librarian died that year. In so small a department so great a loss had a huge impact. My first eighteen months on the job were a difficult and painful time. Despite it all, I would not trade that time, because I count myself lucky to have worked with a great librarian and an



extraordinary human being.

Needless to say, I never attended a formal training session on reference. I believe this is called the throw-her-in-and-see-if-she-floats theory of orientation. We reviewed what happened during the librarian's absence, so at least I got the benefit of hindsight. One of the few disadvantages I can think of to working in a small library is that the learning environment is not rich. In a large department, information is exchanged all the time: It's almost a background noise. You model, you pick up things from your peers. But I didn't have any peers, and because the librarian was gone so much, the one-on-one attention that normally would have made up for environmental deficiencies was often unavailable. I did learn, but the process was slower than it would have been with training.

One thing I needed to learn about was the referral. A major objection to using support staff at the reference desk is the complaint that "paraprofessionals often do not make referrals or do not recognize when to make referrals to a professional. ... Other librarians believe that paraprofessionals can be so eager to help that they will not refer to or consult with a librarian" (McDaniel, 1993). I want to be honest now and say that I did these things. I have to admit that I did spend hours I couldn't really spare trying to answer questions I probably should not have tackled. I was untrained, alone, and desperate to prove myself. Just as I had to learn to identify the best tool to use in answering a question, I had to learn how to identify the best person to answer it. Another way I overcompensated in those early days was to drown the patron in information, out of a need to prove I could do the work. As I gained familiarity with the collection, learned to use our library's reference tools, and experienced success in helping patrons, my insecurity diminished, and so did the overkill. I got better at conducting reference interviews and at identifying

librarians and researchers to refer appropriate questions to. I came to see that placing a good referral was as much a mark of my professionalism as answering the question myself.

I suspect that many people starting reference work experience the anxiety and insecurity that I felt. I was seeking what some psychologists call "self-efficacy," a belief in my ability to perform a specific task, in this case, frontline reference service. If supervising librarians want to minimize these natural overcompensatory behaviors in support staff, then I believe they should provide systematic feedback to paraprofessionals, and create a work environment rich in learning resources such as orientation programs, desk manuals, and subject-oriented workshops.

### Maturing

In speaking honestly about how my performance at the reference desk suf-

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ferred from a lack of training, I don't want to imply that I came to the desk with empty hands. I had college credits in geology and botany and other coursework in invertebrate zoology. I had collected fossils for fifteen years, and been a birder for almost as long. My personal library contains many of the standard works on the natural history and history of the region. And I had nine years of invaluable experience at our main library. I was familiar with the workflow and the personnel there and could provide better general service because I was cross-trained in the work of many departments.

The review process has helped me feel better about my performance. A review is not the best way to initiate training, but it works in a small library after the staff is trained. To this day, the librarian is often gone one or two days a week, and we have to work at keeping each other up-to-date. When the librarian is absent for extended periods, I keep a running FYI file in my computer. I consult with her, telling her what happened during her absence, and she makes recommendations on how to handle ongoing situations. We meet once a week for team meetings at which we share information. An advantage to working in a small library is that the staff gets more one-on-one interaction with the librarian, and in a one-librarian library, you don't worry about getting mixed signals from different supervisors.

Another factor that helped me mature as a worker was the environment. My supervisors were remarkably patient with me as I learned, and they set great examples of a high standard of service. When I was one member of a crowded department at the main library, I didn't really know what librarians did or what was expected of them. In my current position, I've been fortunate to work under two remarkable librarians. The closer I've gotten, the more my respect has grown. I can't help thinking that some of the distance between the two classes of

employees is unnecessary and detrimental. Possible ways to narrow the gap between paraprofessionals and librarians include serving together on committees, working together in a team setting, and pairing at the reference desk.

### Experiences

The librarian is often gone attending meetings, so there are many times when I am the senior staff person, or indeed the only staff person on hand to help patrons. Remote assistance is available from our main library, but I still have a lot of responsibility. If a person has driven 150 miles to use our collection, I can't say "I'm sorry, but the librarian is gone." I must try to help that person. My most memorable experiences in reference have taken place when I was alone and in charge of the library. An incident that stands out in memory occurred when I helped a retired librarian who had missed the computer revolution. She was taking a class at a community college in a nearby county and drove to our library for help on a paper about earthquakes and tsunamis. I showed her how to use the CD-ROM databases, and she enjoyed exploring our library's resources. When she left, she asked whether I could give her something with our library's name on it, and I offered her the librarian's card. I felt good about the transaction, because I thought I had been able to slow myself to her pace and that I had empathized with her and shared in her pleasure as she mastered the new technology. But I was astonished the next week when a fifty-dollar check for the friends of our library came in the mail from her.

The most common ready-reference questions in our library concern the tides and the weather. The most often asked reference questions are about whales and dolphins, but other creatures get their share of questions, too. One such question came from a business gearing up to manufacture miniature crabpots designed to be cast from fishing poles. The crabpots were made of

*See Crabs page 20*



# Internet Filtering and Individual Choice

by Candace D. Morgan

Associate Director  
Fort Vancouver Regional  
Library System



As the debate about the use of Internet blocking/filtering software by public libraries rages on, I am reminded of the Indian parable of “The Blind Men and the Elephant.” Six blind men, each feeling a part of an elephant in order to learn about it, described it variously as like a wall, spear, tree, fan, and rope.

And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong!

—John Godfrey Saxe  
(1816–1887)

It is not my contention that any or all of the regular participants in the current dialog about libraries and Internet filters are “in the wrong.” But I do believe that much discussion is happening without full consideration of the role of the public library in American society today.

American public libraries are usually designated by the policies of their own

governing bodies to be places where the people served by the library gain access to ideas and information. Public libraries are, in other words, designated public forums. The public library is the only government agency in America with the prime mission to provide access to information to all individuals eligible for library service, regardless of income, age, or any other arbitrary distinction. It is the American public library that makes the promise of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution a realizable possibility.

Freedom of speech does not exist if individuals are not free to choose and access all ideas and information they wish. As Justice Dalzell, Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (Pennsylvania) wrote:

At the heart of the First Amendment lies the principle that each should decide for him or herself the ideas and beliefs deserving of expression, consideration, and adherence. Our political system and cultural life rest upon this ideal.

*ALA v. Reno, 929 F. Supp. 824 (1996)*

Public libraries provide their users with freedom of choice by developing diverse collections of constitutionally protected speech. Individual titles in collections are determined by a selection or collection policy that is adopted by the library’s governing body. This body offers opportunities for discussion and input in public meetings.

Choices of public library users, however, are not limited to those identified items from the selection policy. When an individual does not find what she or he wants in the library’s collection, the library offers interlibrary loan and reference services. Such available choices are usually not limited by the selection policy. Libraries providing, for example, access to online periodicals and reference sources like



Information Access Corporation's health, business, and general databases, do not select each available title in the database.

This framework or context, for discussing the role of the American public library, suggests some questions that library boards and staff might ask when considering their library's Internet access. I have included some possible questions, with subsequent comments, below. These comments are my opinion and are not suggested as either the only or right way to consider the question.

**The library provides access to constitutionally protected speech. Is there a way to block only speech that is not constitutionally protected?**

This is a question that must be asked of each potential vendor. To my knowledge, no filter claims that it only excludes constitutionally unprotected speech. The technology and techniques used by companies that produce filters are improving. Many filters can be fine-tuned. An example of such filter fine-tuning would be one that excludes sexually oriented nudity. Sexually oriented nudity, however, is not necessarily legally obscene.

**When the library offers Internet access, has it selected everything on the Internet in the same way that it selects the titles in the collection?**

It depends on what policy the library's governing body uses to make the decision to offer access. The content of the Internet is continually changing. Such change makes it extremely difficult, or impossible to make a selection decision for each individual site. Since the individual using the Internet chooses what to access and the result of the search does not become part of the collection, it can be argued that selecting Internet access as an information service makes more sense.

Developing a library home page is a way that the library can suggest to its patrons the Internet sites chosen by the library's selection policy.

**What is the library's role in protecting children from materials that are inappropriate for them?**

In most cases, libraries classify materials that are intended for children as juvenile or young adult, but do not restrict children's access to materials that are specifically intended for them. Parents and guardians have both the right and the responsibility to choose whether to limit their children's choices in the library. Library staff helps locate materials that parents find appropriate for their children. Libraries also produce children's book lists to assist parents.

A library home page with a "kid's page" and lists of children's Web sites would perform this same function for the Internet. There are also search engines that filter Internet searches from a religious or family perspective. These can also be linked to the library's home page.

**What are the policy implications of using an Internet filter that blocks access to some constitutionally protected speech?**

The library does not purchase all constitutionally protected speech. However, the library's governing body uses a public process to develop the selection policy. Library patrons can use a complaint policy to learn more about the selection criteria. Internet files are produced by private companies. Such companies are not required to disclose the criteria or reasons for their actions to block access to certain sites.

**What are the policy implications of providing access on the Internet to materials that the library has not selected?**



The individual, not the library, makes the decision to access materials on the Internet. The library has selected a tool that enables the individual to exercise choice.

**How can a library provide choices for individuals who want Internet filtering for themselves or their children?**

Currently the only way is to have both filtered and unfiltered workstations. However, this usually will not provide true choice for the library user wishing certain types of materials blocked from access for themselves or their children. The library, in consultation with the filtering company, would still be imposing the same limitations on all users of the filtered workstation. In order to limit the amount of constitutionally protected speech that is blocked, libraries who filter have usually not selected all of the filtering categories offered by their selected software. There are likely to be individuals wanting more categories blocked than the library has chosen.


**Are there other ways the library might offer more choices for individuals?**

Currently libraries and librarians have conceded the choices to software filter vendors. Some of us advocate imposing filters on everyone. Some agree, willingly or as a compromise, to install filters on some, but not all workstations. Freedom to choose what is blocked is limited on the filtered workstations in both of these cases. Finally, some of us oppose any filtering that blocks constitutionally protected speech.

Perhaps if we all agreed that the role of public library service in America is to provide the full range of choices to each individual, we would have the purchasing power to convince at least one software


filter company to develop a filter with many options that could be installed on a workstation with a default of "off." The individual Internet searcher could then choose whether to use a filter and, if she or he decides to filter, there could be a number of filtering options from which to choose.

**Conclusion**

So I, like the blind men in the Indian parable, have ventured to describe Internet filtering as I "see" it. And I too am probably partially right and partially wrong. However, I think it is time that we focus our efforts on the needs of individual library users and, in whatever way possible, become advocates for each individual's ability to exercise free choice in the Internet marketplace of ideas. 



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# The Heart of a Librarian

by Rebecca Cohen  
Supervising Librarian  
Newport Public Library



The heart of this librarian began to form at the age of three when I was first introduced to the magic of libraries. I wanted to live there, to curl up on a bookshelf at night and simply stay. Having grown up in small-town Oregon, the only libraries I knew were the tiny, volunteer-run variety open two or three days a week. Yet, they never ceased to delight me. To me, the people who sat at the desk were my ticket to the entire world and beyond. No matter what I wanted to know or read, they found it for me.

Although my enthusiasm for libraries never faded, it wasn't until my children were born that I seriously contemplated a professional relationship with my beloved libraries. Attending weekly storytimes at the small town library with my children put me under the spell of Blythe Jorgensen. Her enthusiasm was contagious and my budding interest in children's librarianship blossomed under her mentorship. After ten years of workshops, classes, and storytimes, I was hired for my first (and so far only) job as a children's librarian.

What a surprise to discover that librarianship was so much more than storytimes and reference desk hours. As a librarian, people expected me to know

everything—well, almost—or at least be able to find it. From the exact date of Tzar Alexander's execution to snoring remedies, I heard it all. A funny thing happened over the years: I found that I could answer these questions, or at least confidently know how to go about doing so.

It was an even greater revelation to discover what being a children's librarian had done for me outside the library. I'm popular! I'm often stopped in the grocery store by a "knee-hugger" whose parent looks on with consternation as a child attaches herself to me and declares that she loves me, my stories, and most especially, my mascot, Lawrence the Library Bunny. It's also not uncommon to find myself processing a reference query for someone while standing in the line at the bank. Then there's always the race down the halls at one of the schools to act as a courier of materials overdue to their library but improperly returned to ours. And of course, my favorite: doing reader's advisory everywhere I go.

As significant as these outward developments are, the changes to my inner self are even more profound. At one time, the thought of speaking to 600 high school students at an all school assembly was enough to bring on an anxiety attack. Now, just the anticipation sharpens all my senses! I go into overdrive and expect that what I say and do will be received with some degree of success. It is that absolute expectation of success that most amazes me. Furthermore, the confidence gained after presenting thousands of such programs to all different types of people seeps into many aspects of my life. I now find myself at family reunions, company picnics, or large gatherings of any kind being the one who readily steps forward when a "director" is required. If an invitation to speak is given, my hand is up.

Another quality that has carried over from my work as a librarian is an amazing ability to organize anything. Summer reading programs demand the absolute most when it comes to detail and follow-up. This trait has

*See Heart page 20*



# The Sharing Heart

by Steven Engelfried

Senior Librarian, Youth Services  
Beaverton City Library



I never thought of being a librarian when I was a kid. Not even as a fallback just in case my inevitably successful NBA career was cut short by injury. But if I had said I'd be a librarian someday, people who knew me would have said: "That's perfect. Libraries are quiet, and so are you." Fifteen years later, with a fruitless English degree (my inevitably successful great American novel didn't materialize either) and three years as a bookkeeper (the most exciting thing about that career was being able to say that my job title had three consecutive double letters ... somehow, that's not enough), I thought about becoming a librarian. I liked books and I was kind of interested in computers. Besides, I was still one of the most introverted people I'd ever met (although, of course, introverts don't meet many people). So I pictured myself quietly cataloguing books in a basement room somewhere, or maybe pursuing research relentlessly. Others would turn my humble efforts into ground-breaking literature and I would quietly claim a bit of credit for myself.

I enrolled in the University of California, Berkeley Library School and took some classes. They were interesting

enough, but "Children's Literature" stood out. This class made me remember where my love of reading really started. When I was a kid, I not only read books, but I talked about them with brothers and sisters (I had six). It struck me that I might really enjoy talking about books with people and sharing favorite authors and stories just like I did with my family growing up. I realized a children's librarian does this. So the following semester I took "Storytelling." The notion of telling a story to classmates, most of whom had done this before, terrified me; but things I learned in the class helped me through it. I came to realize that the folk tales I would tell had survived hundreds of years and thousands of storytellers. No one had killed them yet. So a shy, introverted former bookkeeper couldn't do much harm, as long as he stuck to the story. I practiced *The Foolish Man*, my first tale, for weeks until I knew it perfectly. The events of the story were so neatly contrived that the audience would get it, regardless of my delivery. The performance was not perfect, but the story worked, and the pattern of relying on the strength of the story has carried me through twelve years as a children's librarian.

Soon after library school I found a job and started telling stories and talking about books with kids. For the most part the first year went pretty well, although there were some difficult moments. During a televised awards presentation for young authors I forgot my speech and stared silently at the camera for thirty seconds. It felt like thirty years. But dreaded moments like these weren't such a big deal. The smiles and appreciation that came my way easily outweighed the mistakes. I found that by putting myself in front of a group of kids, armed with good books and stories, I was making a difference! Kids would ask for copies of the titles, and kindergartners would acquire their first library cards with excitement glowing in their eyes. Even the rough



times ended triumphantly. I visited one fifth grade class during my first year in which the teacher had absolutely no control, and I felt like I was talking to the air. I pushed on, telling myself that the books I'd selected were worth the effort. A few days later, one girl from that class came in asking for a book I'd talked about, *Julie of the Wolves*. I found out then that I could handle being ignored by 29 kids if the 30th listened and became excited about reading.

By choosing good books and stories, I recognized I didn't have to win an audience over with my personality. *Frog and Toad* were the funny guys, and *The Gunniwolf* was scary. Me, I was simply the go-between, introducing the characters to the kids. But things eventually got muddled. Maybe the characters in the stories were funny, but I was the one receiving the laughter, not *Frog and Toad*. I'd walk into a classroom with books and

maybe a puppet or two and I'd hear someone say, "this guy's funny." I have to admit, I loved it! Gradually I got to a point where I was glad, even eager, to share the spotlight with the characters in my stories. In other words: I became a ham. After years of avoiding any kind of attention, I actually looked forward to standing in front of a bunch of kids and entertaining them (as long as I had the security of books and puppets along with me). I like to think I've kept things in perspective. I realize I'd be nothing without *Anansi the Spider* and *The Big Bad Wolf*, and that if I were asked to speak to a group of kids about anything that didn't have to do with books and the library I'd be just another boring grown-up. But this shtick works out fine, because spreading the library message is not only fun, but what I want to do.

The work I do is important. I knew from the start that getting kids excited about books, reading, and the library was valuable, and that people who did this made a difference in the world. It would have been disappointing to have missed out just because I was shy. 🌿



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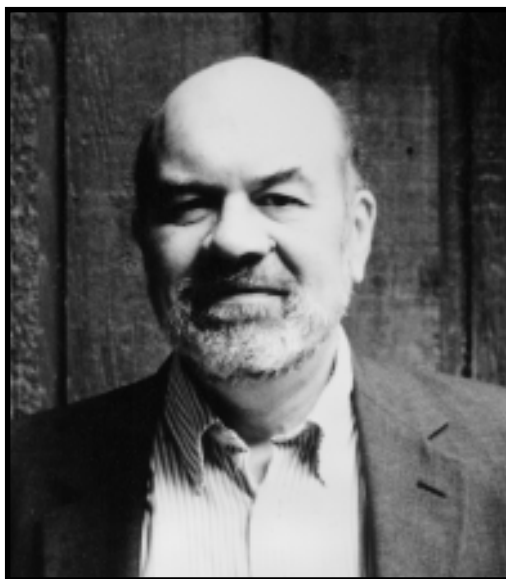
Steven marches in a parade as "Cat in the Hat."



# Some Examples of Oregon Libraries' Responses to September 11

by Fred R. Reenstjerna, Ed.D.

Cataloging Librarian  
Douglas County  
Library System



Librarianship is a profession, not a place. Just as there are physicians who do not work in hospitals, and attorneys who never set foot in a courtroom, so too are librarians more than people who work in libraries. It's important that we keep the definition of our profession in mind when we think about the ways that Oregon librarians responded to the crisis of September 11.

The tragedy of September 11 offered all of us an opportunity to go to the forefront of our communities, demonstrating our special knowledge of locating and making accessible critical information needed by a clientele in crisis.

Any librarian whose professional work was not affected by September 11 must seriously examine their commitment to the profession. If they cannot point to something they did, or to some basic professional tenet they re-examined, or some way their work was changed in response to September 11, then they are just slouching toward retirement. We will (hopefully) not face a crisis as great again in our lives, but we can assess the ways that we as professionals responded to the crisis.



Any librarian whose professional work was not affected by September 11 must seriously examine their commitment to the profession.

James Russell Lowell wrote, "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide ..." Amplifying that idea, Albert Camus wrote, "Not to decide is to decide." We have all made our decisions about September 11; here are some examples of service decisions made by Oregon librarians. Notice the breadth of actions—by type of library, by medium of response, and by community served. This will serve as an incomplete but still impressive testimonial to the responsiveness of Oregon librarians to their communities' needs.

**The Multnomah County Library** (<http://www.multcolib.org>) created Web pages that were an early and comprehensive source for information. Staff designed pages of links to sources for news, contributions to charities, and background information about Afghanistan and related topics. Over a year later, in October 2002, Multnomah County Library staff maintain a site, *Beyond September 11*, that includes links to Library holdings as well as URLs to other information sites (<http://www.multcolib.org/ref/headlines.html>). Multnomah's ongoing work demonstrates that an information need can be ongoing in a community, and librarians' responses must remain up-to-date in dealing with those needs.





**The Beaverton City Library** (<http://www.ci.beaverton.or.us/departments/library/default.asp>) recognized potential local economic effects of September 11. Jill Adams, Business Reference Librarian, reported that her library began coordinating a series of business information programs to provide an expert and detailed look at the Oregon economy. This resulted in a seven-part series of programs throughout the fall and into the winter of 2001, bringing in experts such as Joseph Cortright, John Mitchell, and Gerry Mildner. The speakers highlighted the economic effects on Washington County in several sessions.

**The Tigard Public Library** (<http://www.ci.tigard.or.us/library/default.asp>) assembled a display of books on terrorism (a book on Osama bin-Laden was already in the collection), according to Tony Greiner and Adult Services Librarian Kate Miller. The Library also displayed books on Islam, civil liberties issues, patriotism and related issues, and the Children's Department prepared a display on talking to children about grief and loss. Shortly after September 11, David Stabler, music critic for the *Oregonian*, published a list of classic recordings that were particularly soothing. The Tigard Public Library copied that list, noted the call numbers of items that were in its holdings, and posted a copy near their music section. Kate Miller wrote, "As the anniversary rolled around, I started thinking about the fact that since the book group meeting day had changed from Tuesday to Wednesday, our September meeting would, once again, fall on the eleventh. I decided to choose a book that would commemorate those events." Therefore, for its September 11, 2002 meeting, the Library-sponsored book club read *Writing in the Dust: After September 11*, by Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The evening program included a discussion of the book and a

viewing of the first half of the documentary that aired on Frontline called *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*.

September 11 focused public attention on public safety workers, highlighting the heroic sacrifices of police and firefighters. In Salem, the **Oregon Occupational and Health Administration (OR-OSHA) Resource Center & Video Library** (<http://www.cbs.state.or.us/external/osha/standards/avlibad.htm>) naturally received an increased demand for safety and health information. Don Harris, AV Librarian, reported that the Center acquired five additional training videos: 1) *Anthrax Awareness*; 2) *Emergency Action Plan: Crisis Under Control*; 3) *Rapid Intervention Teams*; 4) *Facility Security*; and 5) *Biological and Chemical Threats: Closing the Door*. As Don points out, "These videos, like our other holdings, are available for loan to any employer or worker in the state of Oregon." Return shipping is the only charge involved. Use of the five titles listed above has been fairly consistent throughout the last year.

Arlene Cohen, Northwest LINK Reference Librarian at **Oregon State University** (<http://osulibrary.orst.edu/linkweb/>), reported that she added URLs to the Northwest LINK Reference Referral Center's home page, directing patrons to needed information sources providing crisis support information (<http://osulibrary.orst.edu/linkweb/patron.htm>). Many of these linked resources were prepared by staff of the Multnomah County Library.

At the Ashland Branch of the **Jackson County Library System** (<http://jcls.org/ashland.html>), Amy Kinard reported two actions by library staff. First, Web sites were posted on the Reference Area White Board to assist reference librarians answering questions. These Web sites included such information as rosters of victims, blood donation needs, ways to talk with children, and current news sites. Second,



the library created displays of circulating books on two topics: grief and feelings, and world religions (including Islam).

Bonnie Hirsh, Adult Services Librarian, summarized activities at the **Eugene Public Library** (<http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/library/>):

First we turned on the TV in the lecture room, so public and staff could follow the news (during that first week). We added links to relevant Web sites to our Web page, we added a September 11 subject heading to the catalog, and put together a bibliography and display. Finally, we updated the book collection (new Islamic art books, for instance).

Eugene citizens were outraged when the local Islamic Cultural Center's building was vandalized with hate messages shortly after September 11. Eugeneans responded with vigils, symposia, demonstrations, and requests for more information. At the Eugene Library a bibliography and display of materials about Islam and the Middle East were quickly created. The materials were not limited to political and religious information, but also included arts and cultures. The Library presented a panel discussion late in October entitled *Keep the Dialog Going: Perspectives on Islamic Culture and History*. The speakers



Eugene citizens were outraged when the local Islamic Cultural Center's building was vandalized with hate messages shortly after September 11.

included the head of Eugene's Islamic Cultural Center, his wife, an American who converted to Islam, a Muslim couple who are graduate students from China, another student couple from Indonesia, and a university professor who had lived and studied in Iran.

The common perception of repressed womanhood was refuted by the thoughtful presentations of the women on the panel. One woman was a fluent translator for her husband who had limited English skills. Replying to a question from the audience, she pointed out that she was here, not as a refugee or immigrant, but as a university graduate student. Another woman said, "It would endanger my life to wear (the head scarf) at home. I am glad to have the freedom to wear it in this country." The American woman explained how a "white bread mid-westerner" converted to Islam.

While precautions had been taken to deal with any disruptive elements, the audience remained respectful, thoughtful, and eager to learn more in order to live in peace with their neighbors.

#### **The Douglas County Library System**

(<http://www.co.douglas.or.us/library>) responded to September 11 by increasing access to materials already in its catalog. When the System converted its automation system to DRA in the early 1990s, some older works in the collection did not get full cataloging records. Fred Reenstjerna, Cataloging Librarian, identified materials such as James Michener's *Caravans* that were related to Afghanistan but lacked full subject access. Since the Library System lacked an extensive collection of books on specific countries in the region, he also added geographical tracings for volumes of *Countries of the World* and related series that contained significant information about Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, as well as Afghanistan.

As the previous issue of *OLAQ* pointed out, children are people, too—and September 11's effects were as critical to this



part of our service community as to the adult sector. Cheryl Weems, Children's Librarian at the **Bend Public Library** (<http://dpls.lib.or.us/>), reported on special efforts to get information to children and to their parents:


1. On the (Bend Public Library's) children's Web page we had links to a bunch of sites from ALA to the American Academy of Pediatrics which were targeted towards helping children through the crisis;
2. We went through our collection on subjects ranging from grief to Islam to tolerance and used many bibliographies that came out on PubYac, ALA, etc., to beef up the collection;
3. We participated in the Brooklyn Public Library-sponsored "children writing to children" by providing paper and writing materials, and then mailing the letters once they were all collected;
4. At the time, we were working on a small donation through the local hospice to complement our collection on books dealing with grief; we created a bibliography of these titles.

By working to meet the information needs of one segment of their community, the Bend Public Library was already equipped to meet an unexpected information need.

Oregon libraries continued to meet the needs of their communities as the anniversary of September 11 approached. In Klamath Falls, the **Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT)** (<http://www.oit.edu/lbry>) received donations of materials from the local Islamic and Jewish communities for the Library's collection during 2001 and 2002. Working with these community groups, OIT sponsored a speakers' series in the fall of 2002, according to Marita Kunkel, Director of the Library.

In April 2002, the **Newport Public Library** sponsored a program by Afghan-American photographer Ibrahim Wahab, reported Reference Coordinator Sheryl Etheridge. Entitled *Where is Afghanistan?*, the program documented Wahab's recent two-month visit to his homeland. Sheryl observed, "Many people spoke up and asked what they personally could do to help. They came to the program to learn about Afghanistan, and left with a fresh, new perspective."

The Rev. Peter Marshall wrote, "Life is measured not by its duration but by its donation." The quality of our professional life is indeed measured by the donation that we make to our clients of our unique professional skills. We must not think that our response in any library was unimportant or insignificant: all of us who thought about the nature of our work and the needs of our clients, and who used the resources we had to meet those needs—all of us were responding to the sudden and special crisis in our communities. And I use the term "community" deliberately to mean those people whom we serve, regardless of the type of library we work in. Academic and special libraries have communities of users, just as public and school libraries have communities.

The examples described in these pages are only a partial demonstration of the response of Oregon libraries. They are, however, exemplary in their scope and initiative. When we look back on the effects of September 11, we can be proud of the responses that Oregon librarians made to this historic crisis. 



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# Deep Change—Diversity at Its Simplest

by Sandra Rios Balderrama  
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Arizona



At its simplest “diversity” is about people. People who want to make a change from that which appears static or homogenous. People who want to create change in and around themselves. In my view, diversity is about people who want to deal with reality as it is, as it has been, as it will be.

But my reality may not be yours. Most of the time we say the word *diversity* using different assumptions and definitions. Some call it a concept, an ideology, a trend, an issue. Some call it a “movement.” Call it what you want. Stretch it far and wide. Focus on the center of the peach kernel. For some, diversity is a choice of how one wants to work, of how one wants to live, of how one wants to relate to other people within this country, within the world. It is about holding up an earth flag along with your national flag, gay pride flag, POW/MIA flag, if you wish. That is my definition. Create your own. But make sure that it is meaningful to you. And not your window dressing. We can cover up for anyone but ourselves.

I suggest this approach and encourage personal reflection because although organizational “diversity” statements are worthy and important, an individual

working the reference desk, or making a collection development decision, or a hiring decision can sabotage the best of vision statements. There is power “on the desk.” There is power behind closed doors. Everyday leadership and “small” acts of intertwined personal and professional accountability go a long way to create an environment conducive to mutual respect, reciprocation, and learning. This is an environment where I want to work.

“Diversity” has not been a choice for Americans. It was “imposed” upon those of us who live on this land currently identified as the United States. As long as we choose to live, work, plant or study here, we are accountable for the herstory/history that brought us to this present moment, this present day. Call it the frustrating debris. The remnants. The “fall out.” Call it a blessing bathed in trauma, victory, integrity, courage, and destiny. Call it a mystery of forever wondering why it occurred. Call it living in the past and not moving on to the future. Call it honored memory. Regardless, here we are—truly a multicultural population with diverse lifestyles, sexual orientations, learning styles, etc. “... my etcetera country, my wounded country, my child, my tears, my obsession” (Alegria, 1995).

Some of us were brought by force. Some of us had our homes taken by force. Some of us “ran” here by choice—we ran, boated, trained, walked, and crawled for our lives. How could we forget this? Why do we forget? That nothing here was “discovered” for the first time. And that those who survived did not survive as an empty slate. Language may have been beaten out of people. Long black hair was cut. When I recently viewed *The Laramie Project*, it seemed just yesterday that Matthew Shepherd\* was left hanging. Make no mistake. There is a memory. Memory prevailed. And there are strategies for retaining that which speaks to us from the past in an honest and authentic way. Even an assimilated, U.S. educated, English-speaking



woman of 2003 still “feels” the sound of her grandmother clapping dough between her hands. She “feels” the smell of the tortilla toasting on the hotplate as she awakens, on Saturday morning, before church, in Los Angeles. This gives her memory of “the fallout” but it is also restorative.

Libraries, today’s libraries, accessible libraries help us remember the history and herstory. We are dangerous.

In October or November 1989, I was part of a Transition into Management Program sponsored by UCLA and the California State Library. Henry Der, then Executive Director of Chinese for Affirmative Action, told ten of us that the library needed to be the place where new immigrants learned about civil rights and where Americans of every background learned about global situations that catalyzed migration to the U.S. In Der’s mind, libraries were the place to exchange and reciprocate information and history/herstory and thus, begin building a shared future. Somewhere along the way, between U.S. citizenship classes and U.S. education for Americans, there was a disconnect that in Der’s mind, librarians as educators, bridge builders, information navigators could quite naturally and powerfully address.

When I think about libraries and about the future I usually think of a 24/7 “mercado,” a huge open market that you might find in Italy, France, Mexico, maybe even Portland—many places in the world that I have never been. Perhaps it is the color and noise of exchange and bartering that I find pleasing. The mercado is a multisensory environment that keeps me alert, challenged, frustrated, as well as pleased. In the library work environment I picture the richest of diverse appearances, ideas, and perspectives at the table where something is decided, designed, discussed and, yes, maybe even bartered.

There is inevitably tension. There is tension because each of us loves our favorite ideas, epiphanies, stories. There is tension because one of us has an untold story that cannot tolerate hearing another’s so freely told. There is tension because one of us

resents the silence of another—the peace with which another chooses to listen and reflect before talking. There is tension because we don’t know how to listen more, talk less or talk up more, listen less.

But in my “picture” usually there is food somewhere at the beginning or the end. Food is exchanged. Or a story, laugh, song, or poem. Foods for the soul. And when I remember this meeting of decision making, design or information exchange, I remember the “face” that passed me the blueberry muffin covered by the Guatemalan textile cloth and lying in the Kenyan basket. Effective communication amongst diverse peoples that no longer rely on a mainstream of standards requires stamina, patience, willingness to listen deeply and to look “again,” and the courage to relax the ego in order to develop new ways of communicating on behalf of a shared goal—service to library users.

We know with our gut, values, ethics, mother wit, our rationale, left and/or right minds, our quantitative and qualitative analyses that diversity is about human beings striving to “become” more whole as individuals and more “real” as a global village. This global village is beyond e-mailing a pen pal in Honduras or reading a blog from Iraq. The electronic and digital global villages have had an important role in forcing us to deal with one another (beyond a box of crayons, a mixed salad, a beautiful quilt, a rainbow of handheld hands), but being behind the computer screen is different than the face-to-face contact we “face” in everyday life. In library work, we share “face” time with colleagues, co-workers, patrons, students, advocates, trustees, and stakeholders. At the degree or level of “face” is where we attempt to interact on behalf of delivering excellent service and/or on behalf of having a work environment that is more than tolerable—that is generative and conducive to creativity, evaluation, and renewal. Throw a little acknowledgment and respect in and we are more than happy. Our standards of appraisal rise from “It’s better than a kick in the butt”



or “No news is good news” to “My administrators are not afraid to tell me I’ve done a good job” or “Our library not only looks at people’s experience but at their potential.”

Dipping into actions that result from “soft skills” is referred to as “touchy-feely.” Dipping into actions that result from “hard skills” is referred to as “good business.” I happen to believe that soft skills are more difficult to hone and to practice. In reality interpersonal skills may never carry the same weight as technological skills and most standards of operation and performance are scientifically and quantitatively bound. Whether you weep at the sight of Private First Class Lori Piestewa’s\* family delivering big pots of food or trays covered by crinkled foil upstairs to the family’s porch, or whether you rely on the up-to-the-minute demographic or scientific data, when you are implementing meaningful diversity work you must know that you will be going against the grain. Tears can be ridiculed. Data can be manipulated. Diversity is typically repelled and resisted. But with time, diligence, persistence, integrity and, I believe, ethics, the salmon makes it back home to the root, the kernel, the base, the heartbeat—the global drumbeat—that is at the base of diversity.

At the first level of diversity, typically our most successful, is programming and collections. No matter what our background we are capable as librarians of displaying, programming, and building collections with multiculturalism and intellectual diversity in mind. We know about Gay Pride month. We know about Spanish-language materials. We know we must include small press publications. This is an important level. A good level.

At the second level of diversity, we focus on staffing. This is who we work with, work for, work above in the organic or mechanical structures of our library organizations. We provide great programming but we look around and at “face value” we see mirrors of ourselves but not of the people we serve or want to serve. It is possible that we as a homogenous group think differently and work differently, but when we come together at the library meeting table we don’t see

whom we do laundry next to, who owns the restaurants down the block, who lives next door, who travels on their skateboard, or who walks with Ethiopian fabrics billowing in slight breezes. We know we are capable of learning a different language or of “brushing up” on another culture but we know deeply that there is only so far we can go. We will always be an outsider.

It’s OK. We don’t have to impose ourselves or become awkward “culture vultures.” We don’t have to pretend. Instead we recruit for diversity in an honest, authentic manner. We actively and purposely look for people who will be different from us. We look for qualifications and the rest is a surprise package. Perhaps. Perhaps not. Perhaps we obtain the visual diversity of the current Bush administration. This is good. I like to see different colors and genders of people. Perhaps, in addition to visible diversity, we get intellectual diversity and fresh bravery.

These last qualities may or may not set the system(s) of comfort on edge. Regardless, we focus and we go beyond a good faith effort, implement diverse strategies, re-articulate our job descriptions and recruitment brochures, connect with new or mainstream library groups or with those representing the GLBT, multicultural, and people with disability communities, and stretch timeframes if we need to in order to reach a diverse audience of qualified applicants. We do things differently because we are serious about a diverse workforce. Whew! Lots of work, lots of energy, and serious resources are required at this important level of inclusion and opportunity. It is a good level.

At the third level of diversity we are colorful at the table, reference desk, and on staff development day. We implement a shared library vision. We are able to finally say that we have visible diversity throughout the ranks. We may be able to include true and natural photos of visible diversity in our recruitment brochures. But there remains an element of cookie-cutterism, an expectation of “conformity” as to what organizational behavior, meeting protocol, and standards



and appraisals of performance look like. Circles try to be squares. Squares try to be circles. Elephants try to lose weight to fit in the giraffe's house (Thomas, 1999).

President's Bush's administration or the diverse composition of our armed forces are other examples. Most often, in the case of libraries, are the unspoken standards, measurements and gauges that are potentially detrimental to the contributions of employees from any affinity group who don't "measure up" to those particular standards. This is an important level, however, because it reduces visible homogeneity. It creates a workforce that will probably be more attractive to potential library users. This level illustrates a choice to participate and to be included in the common recognitions and rewards of being "American." Many paved a path with a machete to obtain and implement this right—to become part of the President's cabinet or the Supreme Court, to use the elevators at ALA conferences (like A.P. Marshall\*), or to be part of the armed services. Yet I would like to see us push further to another level—deeper or higher—depending on your metaphors.

At the fourth level of diversity is a rainbow coalition. It devotes time to creating new and reviewing traditional operating principles, values, and communication methods. Perhaps the methods of "rounds" (going around the room to hear everyone and allowing for introverts to think and speak without interruption), true brainstorming (getting the ideas out in a non-judgmental, non-interrupted, non-edited manner), "interest-based" negotiations (focus on the interest and the issue not the person or the "problem"), incorporation of multisensory data (for visual people like me), or a dozen other methods may be explored or designed. The rainbow coalition figures out "how" it will work together. It will create a shared agreement for how to work together and how to gather and incorporate "multiplex" perspectives.

The group has decided that mainstream standards no longer serve the contemporary workforce and thus start to create new guidelines and agreements in order to obtain

the richest fruit, bartering, and sounds of the "mercado." At this level the group may be able to tackle and effectively honor the intellectual diversity of each person, each person in part forever subject to appearance or attached to some affinity group, but at the same time contributing individual thoughts, perspectives, ideas, plans, strategies not so much because these might be Latina thoughts but because like my Grandma used to say with gusto, "Sandra!! God gave us a mind!" And at this level the group will begin to understand that gravitation to any affinity group can happen at the same time as one's own individuality is expressed. For example, while in charge of the Spectrum Scholarship Initiative at ALA I often had to explain: "No, the Spectrum Scholars are not all straight. They are gay, bisexual, lesbian. Some have disabilities that are visible or not visible to you. Some are also Jewish. Some are Asian and American Indian at the same time. Some are straight. Some were born in this country. Others only reside here. Some are over 55; others are in their 20s. They are every one of us and they are not any one of us." At this fourth level we begin to live more comfortably with simplicity and complexity. We begin to understand we know little but we understand what is the right thing to do.

At the fifth level of diversity are mutual reciprocity, respect, and exchange. Skill for skill. Lesson for lesson. Coins for a kilo of tangelos. Heart for heart. At this level I am recruited to a library; I get the job; I learn about the new "operating principles" and the overall expectations of a shared vision. I am interested and am willing to learn and to practice them. But if there is "true" diversity, then I expect the employer and organization to be interested in learning from me and to consider incorporating my added value into the organization's values. It is not really about "me." It is really about consistent growth, generation, incorporation and evaluation of both a work environment and the service/product provided. As with my employer, I have mutual respect for the user and my colleagues. I am not attempting to "better" or "empower" someone that I am superior to. I share my skill.




I learn from others' questions and interests. I simply "walk" in the manner of the leaders I admire. I act even though I won't be written up in the *American Libraries*. I speak softly. I speak enthusiastically in my native language without punishment. I not only applaud or throw tomatoes from the sidelines but I participate in the moment. If there is a hate crime against a gay human being then I see it as a Latina/Jewish/Arabic/feminist/paraplegic problem. We share the problem, hurt, issue, pain, feeling, data gathering for another human whose "becoming" was cut down.

Ms. Alberta Tenorio, library assistant at the Oakland Public Library, advised the 1999 ALA Spectrum Scholars during the "Spirit of Service Leadership" curriculum: "Don't do it for 'them,' do it for you." Henry Gardner, past city manager for Oakland, CA, advised California library workers at a 1995 or 1996 California Library Association conference: "If you can't be enlightened regarding diversity then be selfish. Do it for yourself and the future of this country, the future of libraries." At the 1998 Colorado Library Association, Susan Kotarba, librarian with the Denver Public Library, said, "I have met the future librarians that I want to work with. They are the teenagers that work in my library." The teenagers are nothing less than a future librarian. (Gasp.) Someone else had told me that the young group of teenagers on one of the original Spectrum posters looked like "gang bangers." Ah. Pumping heart. The teenagers are our librarians.

PFC Piestewa's family and friends cook in big pots like my family does. Matthew Shepherd was my Uncle Joe. Alberta is my grandmother. Claribel Alegria's "etc." country of El Salvador is my own. Mr. A.P Marshall is Cesar Chavez. Elevators. Vineyards. There is both power and need in the least obvious places. The heartbeat. The shared drumbeat that is our global mother. Perhaps this fifth level might be the last level, the deepest level, the peach kernel. Frankly, I am not sure.

May your levels, your steps, your actions, your reflections, your attempts all be acknowledged. May they all be "true." May you remember the face of the person who passed

you the bread. May discomforts around diversity eventually enlighten. May you demonstrate courage to try something new. May you give one another the benefit of the doubt. May you bark and growl, bring out the statistics, draw pictures and circles—in a meeting where there are shared agreements of time and communication. May your exchanges at your local mercado be fruitful. May your worktables produce splinters. May your famous evergreens reciprocate oxygen for your carbon dioxide. 

*This article is dedicated to Faye Chadwell and my friends at Multnomah County Library: Sara Ryan, Patricia Welch, Ruth Metz, and the Latino Outreach staff.*

#### \*Notes

21-year old Matthew Shepherd died on October 12, 1998, the victim of an anti-gay hate crime perpetrated in Laramie, Wyoming.

Private First Class Lori Piestewa, age 23, was the first Native American woman in the U.S. armed forces to die as a result of combat. Piestewa was part of the Army's 507th Maintenance Company stationed in Iraq during March 2003.

Librarian, author and scholar, A. P. (Albert Prince) Marshall contributed much to African American librarianship. The father of ALA OLOS Director Satia Orange, Marshall died in 2000.

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## Crabs

Continued from page 4

molded plastic that could have colored dyes injected into it, and the manufacturer wanted to know whether one color was more appealing to crabs than another. A review of the literature revealed that while crabs do have sophisticated vision, and do seem to see in color, foraging behavior of crabs revealed that, "No, feeding crabs do not have favorite colors."

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. 

## Heart

Continued from page 8

transferred to home life in unexpected ways. In my previous life, I "piled, not filed." Now, my grocery list gets written down in order of the aisles at my favorite store and the bookcases at home are organized by Dewey, sans the spine labels. Thanks to this organizational expertise, I've had a number of sublime moments when an event that I've coordinated goes off flawlessly.

All these qualities have been a great benefit to my life, but what I treasure most is the standing I've earned with the children of my community. Being loved by innumerable children is a benefit that I never envisioned

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when I began this work. Knowing that children and parents trust me implicitly fills me with pride as well as an awesome responsibility to merit that stature and the privilege. It reaffirms my underlying belief in being ever upright and true, for there are always little ones watching, and learning from me. Librarianship keeps me honest. 



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