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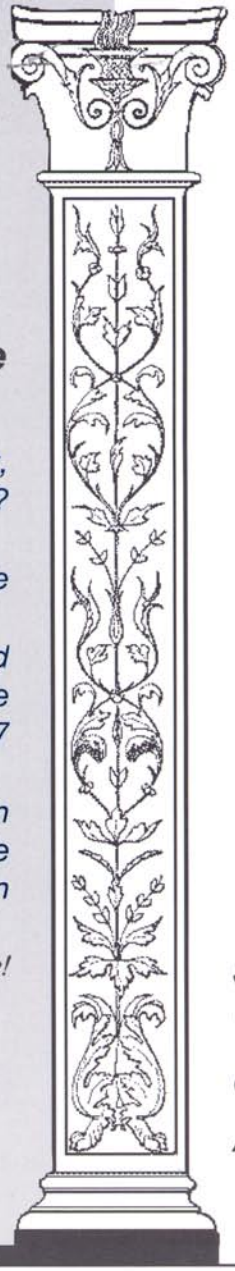
OLA Quarterly

Public Involvement Means Public Support



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OLA Quarterly

Reflections On A Theme

When I was asked to participate in the OLA election process last year, my thoughts turned to the ideas and concepts I wanted to emphasize if elected.

As my mind wandered (as it is inclined to do), my thoughts kept returning to a single phrase which neatly sums up my 15 years as a public library director: "Public involvement means public support." For a number of related reasons, I believe that this concept can be employed to serve every public library.

Public librarians request the public's support for everything we do. This includes funding levies, building projects, program developments, and even our inevitable intellectual freedom conflicts.

In Oregon the level of patron support underscores the level of public involvement. To sustain this involvement, we librarians have only to positively acknowledge and encourage it. I hope that anyone who can adapt or make use of this "Public involvement means public support" theme to improve their library will feel free to do so.

This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* includes a veritable smorgasbord of library topics. The breadth and viewpoint of the authors, while running the gamut from serious to frustrated to funny, is always polished and professional. I know you will all want to join me in thanking them for the thought-provoking efforts which made this issue possible.

Sara Charlton, *Guest Editor*
Tillamook County Library

www.open.org/ola

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The Gift to the Citizens of Coos Bay

by Carol Ventgen
Director
Coos Bay Public Library

Thanks to a gift from the citizens of the city of Coos Bay, 1998 promises to be a busy and exciting year for the Coos Bay Public Library. The "gift" was resounding approval at the polls in the November 3, 1997, election for expansion of the library building. With a 2-to-1 margin — a 67 - 33 percent — and a voter turnout of 58.8 percent, city residents endorsed a proposal to spend $1.5 million in urban renewal funds for a 10,000-square foot addition to the existing 16,000-square-foot library building.

When the city's proposal surfaced, there was already wide recognition in the community of the library's need to expand and general understanding of many of the issues involved. This prior knowledge stemmed from community involvement in a long planning process culminating last year in efforts to use urban renewal dollars for a much larger building expansion. These efforts came to a halt because of the threat to urban renewal from passage of Measure 47. Some people had opposed the large project; many had supported it. Almost everyone was aware of it. It was against this backdrop of community awareness that the November ballot measure was filed. The immediate mobilization of a strong group of committed library supporters to campaign for the measure and the consistent effort by city officials to disseminate information about the proposal assured a positive outcome.

Some of the factors involved may be unique to Coos Bay. First of all, the measure was advisory only, and the city Urban Renewal agency was not bound by the outcome. When Agency officials saw that urban renewal money would be available under Measure 50 after all, they decided to ask voters their opinion on spending some of it for the library, even though a vote was not required. When Mayor Joanne Verger introduced the idea, library supporters received their first challenge. Filing date for the November election was near, and it was a mail-in election. There were only a few weeks to prepare the voters for the measure.

The mayor and city manager also used some very effective non traditional methods of getting information to the public.

Normally a ballot measure would be anticipated and planned for well ahead of time, and a campaign organization would be built. There was no time for that here. In this case, a core group of dedicated library supporters made all the difference. Basically, a small group composed of Friends of the Library volunteers, Board of Trustees members, city officials, and staff (working on our own time to campaign, of course) quickly took action. A political action committee was formed. The Friends group immediately contributed $1,000, and donations from the community were solicited. Board member Chris Guernsey is credited with raising over $2,000 in just a few days. The money was used in traditional ways familiar to library campaigners: A constant flow of information was presented to voters throughout the voting period, especially during the two weeks after ballots were mailed.

The political action committee decided that the limited funds and time available could best be used on a mailing targeted to precincts that had voted favorably on library measures in the past, on personal endorsement ads in the daily newspaper, *The World*, and on radio messages.

The promotional mailing went out just as voters were receiving their ballots in the mail. Whether it was because of a targeted mailing or in spite of it, the measure was approved in every city precinct.

Sixteen small personal endorsement ads were scheduled in the newspaper to run every day from the time ballots were mailed until the last day of voting. The 16 people represented different constituencies in the community and were familiar to various groups. The ads were run again in a shopper sent to all residents.

Two sets of radio spots were created addressing key issues. Each spot was aired on different groups of radio stations aimed at different audiences. The spots were scheduled so that one group aired as ballots were received, and the second set aired closer to election day. All three — mailing, newspaper ads, and radio spots — emphasized the library's space needs, urged a yes vote, and sought to overcome anticipated voter concerns by addressing particular issues.

The World newspaper was incredibly supportive, opting to run frequent articles about library building issues and other library activities. It ran three very favorable editorials. Requests for coverage of specific voter concerns that emerged during the campaign got immediate and positive responses.

Mayor Joanne Verger and City Manager Bill Grile took a very active role in creating a high degree of voter awareness by constantly disseminating objective information about the library building proposal. Some of this information dissemination took traditional forms: speaking to community groups and doing radio interviews. An issue of the city's quarterly newsletter to Coos Bay residents was published in October and featured the library project.

See **Gift** *page 15*

Jackson County Serial Levies

by Ronnie Budge
Director
Jackson County Library

Four serial levy elections for improved library services. Four times the Jackson County Library "beat the odds" and overcame voter reluctance to increase local property taxes.

On each occasion, it was public involvement, i.e. grassroots support, that made the difference — not paid professional PR people, not library staff, and not big dollars.

The very first election campaign in 1984 was planned by a group of amateurs who had never done such a thing before. They established a few principles:

Run a positive campaign. Talk about the good things the library does. Talk about the better things the library could do with more funding. Don't talk about how bad things will be if the measure fails. Don't even plan for what will happen if it fails.

Keep things simple. Don't talk dollars, talk services. Tell people what they want to hear (but never lie). Get out the yes vote and ignore the no vote.

Make it apparent that everyone's friends and neighbors are voting yes.

Probably the levy would have passed that first time even without a real campaign. The library's funding had been cut drastically two years before. The book budget was almost nonexistent. With the equivalent of only 13 paid employees operating 14 branches, most branches were open only 10 hours a week, and service was limited to checking books in and out.

Volunteers and Friends of the Library organizations made it possible even to provide this minimal level of service. Volunteers and Friends also got the first serial levy passed. They told the voters that volunteers and bake sales are fine, but they are not enough. It takes paid, trained staff to run a library, and it takes tax dollars to pay the telephone and electric bills. The voters believed the volunteers and Friends in a way that they may not have believed the library director.

In each election, community residents with personal experience of these services were asked to help get out the yes vote. Many provided testimonials, which were turned into newspaper and radio ads. Others wrote letters to the editor. They all eagerly put up lawn signs.

Library Advisory Committee members (what other libraries call *trustees*) and Friends board members formed the core of each election planning committee. Having active and committed people already involved with the library through these organizations "jump-started" every campaign.

The most recent campaign occupied the summer of 1996, from July 4 to Labor Day. It was chaired by a Library Advisory Committee member who was a school teacher on his summer "vacation." He encouraged the Friends of the Library in each branch to "do their own thing" to pass the library serial levy in their community. Some chose to run ads in local papers. Others walked in parades or handed out brochures in front of the local market. Again, the existence of these Friends groups (even though most are very small) made it easier to get the campaign going.

Thirteen years and four elections later, library service in Jackson County has grown dramatically. A computer catalog and circulation system links the now 15 branches, courier vans go to each facility daily, librarians provide high quality reference services from four regional centers (assisted by CD-ROM and Internet resources not dreamed of 13 years ago), outreach staff deliver materials to the homebound and to child day care centers, and youth services librarians give book talks in schools, bringing more eager readers to the public library.

Four serial levies, even successful ones, took a toll on the library, however. The campaigns (and instability of funding) diverted attention from other planning issues, such as capital expansion needs. Because the Jackson County Library was totally dependent on levy funding, each time it faced total closure if the measures did not pass. Employees were on an emotional roller coaster every three to five years.

Ironically, Measures 47 and 50, which hurt many public libraries in Oregon, turned the Jackson County Library's serial levy into a permanent property tax. We do not anticipate going to the voters for another serial levy anytime soon. (Although if luck holds, we may be seeking bond approval for capital needs.)

Simultaneously, however, Measure 50 made the property tax part of the county's general fund, not necessarily dedicated to library service. For 13 years, we went directly "to the people" for library funding. We are now back to the more typical situation of being one department among many seeking approval for an adequate operating budget from governing officials.

But even now, we know that public support is vital. To earn that support, we must continue to provide outstanding service and build our library's reputation among the people who pay the bills.

Now That We Have a District, What Do We Do?

Forming a District: The Lincoln County Experience

by Diedre Conkling
District Librarian
Lincoln County Library District

The people in Lincoln County will tell you that you will be disappointed if you expect the formation of a Library District to be a quick and easy task. According to their experience, you must be willing to work on the formation slowly and surely for many years.

The Early Years

The library directors and city managers in the seven cities of Lincoln County had recognized for many years that they needed to find a way to provide library service to the people living outside their city limits. They could not continue to provide free service (with no tax support), and fee-based service caused even more problems. Once a year they would go, en masse, before the county commissioners to request funding and would meet with limited success. The county commissioners gave $750 to four libraries (Siletz, Waldport, Yachats, and Toledo). The Newport and Lincoln City libraries, which may have also been getting similar funding, started charging a nonresident fee of $12.

It appears the county commissioners finally tired of this yearly ritual and set up a Lincoln County Public Library Board in July 1976, consisting of eight citizen members from different areas of the county. The board was charged with establishing "a method of taxation to support public libraries in providing better library service to all the people of Lincoln County." The county commissioners then authorized funding for a library consultant, Phyllis I. Dalton, to help with this process.

On February 15, 1978, Dalton presented her study, Countywide Cooperative Library Service, Lincoln County, Oregon: An Action Plan. The plan called for a countywide serial levy to be paid by both city and county residents to provide funding for library services on a nonfee basis. The county commissioners accepted the plan for the levy; however, it never passed.

The plan read as follows:

So that people living in jurisdictions supporting public libraries will not pay twice for public libraries, the amount paid by the people living in cities with public libraries into the serial library levy will be returned to the cities. The remaining funds will be distributed to the incorporated cities with public libraries according to population and according to per capita support. This fund will be an equalization grant. It will be based on the percentage the population of an individual city with a public library is to the total population of all cities with public libraries in Lincoln County. This percentage will be applied to one-half of the remaining funds. The Grant will also be based on the percentage the per capita city support of a public library in an individual city is to the total per capita city support of all cities with public libraries in Lincoln County. This percentage will be applied to the other half of the remaining funds. The total of these two amounts becomes the Equalization Grant. The Library Levy Refund to the cities prevents the double payment of taxes for library service and the Equalization Grant allows for extended use of the public libraries countywide.

Needless to say, this proposal was difficult to explain to the public, who generally felt that this levy really was double taxation.

So the librarians continued their yearly pilgrimage to the county commissioners. The citizen boards and librarian task forces continued to try to find a way to fund countywide library service. By 1982 Newport, Lincoln City, and Toledo were charging a $15 nonresident fee. The fee grew to $45-$50 by 1990.

On October 12, 1988, 10 years after the Dalton report and with continued lobbying from area librarians, citizens, and the special Library Task Force, the Lincoln County commissioners voted to form the Lincoln County Library District. According to minutes from the May 4, 1989, meeting, the Library Task Force recommended the following:

"The Lincoln County Commissioners establish a library district with a tax base-supported library and service to the underserved community in Lincoln County. Other recommendations included that the board be elected by zones, that cities could opt to be excluded from the district, and that a portion of tax receipts be contracted to Lincoln City, Newport and Toledo libraries to compensate them for services offered to non-residents. Additional funds would be used for outreach services, other county-wide services, and administrative costs. Residents would be taxed at a rate which would fund these services. The suggested rate to compensate existing libraries is $20 per capita."

Prior to the formation of the district, the county commissioners held public hearings, at which no real opposition was presented. The library district was formed "without either a vote of the county's residents or provision of a source of funding," according to district board member Ruthanne Lidman. The cities of Lincoln City, Newport, and Toledo already had libraries that were well supported by city tax revenue and were not included in the district. Later the cities of Depoe Bay, Waldport, and Yachats withdrew from the district.

The first library district board was elected on March 28, 1989. Representing five zones in the county, the new board members were Margaret Drescher (Zone

1), Debbie Dowell (Zone 2), Carol Fisher (Zone 3), Anne Swinehart (Zone 4), and Ruthanne Lidman (Zone 5). Fortunately, a very strong board was elected, since they had more issues to address than any of them may have imagined. They were wise enough to seek help from local librarians and other advisors. Lidman Said:

"We convened ourselves as the Board of Directors for the first time on May 4, 1989, elected a President (me) and a Secretary pro tem (Anne Swinehart), and learned that we had inherited a debt of $1,095.00: the cost of holding the election which put us in office! It was a bit overwhelming to start out in debt. None of us had any prior experience with running a municipal corporation; we knew nothing about Oregon budget laws . . ."

"We had so many things to learn," she continued, "and so many things to do, and we had no staff — none. We had to write and adopt by-laws, a mission statement, goals and objectives. We needed to adopt a temporary budget and convince someone to fund it! We had to purchase directors and officers insurance, design and print stationery, appoint a registered agent, and formally establish and record the district's boundaries for taxing purposes. The county commissioners provided just $2,200 to get us through fiscal '89-90; plus, they paid off that initial debt of $1,095."

Once the board had an operating budget and those other basics taken care of, it designed the district's long-term program, decided what the staffing requirements would be, created an appropriate budget, and wrote the necessary job descriptions. Most importantly, the board decided what kind of long-term funding base would be the best and looked for a way to make that funding happen.

During the next few months the library district board met with Jim Scheppke, library development administrator for the Oregon State Library; Wayne Belmont, Lincoln County legal counsel; Ed Todd, Lincoln County assistant assessor; Dana Jenkins, elections manager; and local librarians. The board members also began touring local libraries and other library districts. They gathered information about districts from every source they discovered during their investigation. By September 30, 1989, a mission statement "Providing all Lincoln County residents with excellent library service" and goals were developed:

1. Provide fee-free access to library services and materials for all Lincoln County residents.

2. Develop countywide outreach services to the elderly, handicapped, and those lacking transportation.

3. Develop countywide preschool library programs, including adequate materials.

4. Develop countywide access to a broad range of reference services.

By February 1990 the board decided to place a measure on the May 15, 1990 ballot to establish a tax base for the library district. They decided to keep the tax base below 50 cents per $1,000. The proposed tax base was $416,466. A PAC, the Library Access Committee, was formed to campaign for the measure. Excellent publicity was created for the election through the PAC's efforts and the regular reports in the media about the library district development. However, the election failed by 93 votes, and it was back to the drawing board.

FUNDING—FINALLY!

Though disappointed with the election results, the library district board was not unprepared. They had developed two plans based on passage or failure of the measure. A budget request for 1990-91 funding was quickly prepared and presented to the county commissioners. At the June 19, 1990, board meeting a decision had to be made about whether to go for a serial levy or wait until November and try again for a tax base. Though it would delay funding and might have been more risky, the board decided it was best to try for a tax base to ensure stable funding.

By the end of July, new officers had been elected: Margaret Drescher, president, and Anne Swinehart, secretary. The decision had been made to keep the proposed tax base at the same amount, $416,466. The reasons for the failure of the election had been fully discussed. It was felt that the library district might be in a stronger position if contracts for library services with the cities were developed before the election. Board members were already requesting samples of intergovernmental agreements from other library districts. The county commissioners gave the library district $6,250 in funding for 1990-91, and the election process began again.

November 1990 was an interesting time to try to pass a tax base. Measure 5, a tax limitation measure, was

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Seeking Enlightenment in a Library Campaign

by Michael K. Gaston
Director
Deschutes County Library

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.

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.

If you are into spiritual growth, you really should put down that copy of Ram Dass and get involved in a library election.

I Was There for the Ride!!

by Ed House
Director
Albany Public Library

My tenure as OLA president has been an eye opener in many ways. In the beginning I often felt like a flea on the back of a big dog. I was there for the ride, trying to get what little I could before being scratched off. I had much to learn, but with the guidance and support of Nan Heim, our OLA lobbyist, I soon began to feel more comfortable in the legislative milieu.

One of the first things I learned was that individual members of the legislature were real people, trying to do their best for those whom they served. One of their biggest problems was that "those whom they served" were each and every one of us: individuals, interest groups, and businesses all over Oregon and even beyond our borders. Each of us had what we honestly thought were very pressing needs which should be given high priority in the legislative agenda. These groups ran the gamut from school funding and crime prevention through motorcycle helmets and race track funding.

I observed that the Legislature responded most positively to those groups who were high profile and well organized, having grassroots support and financial backing. In most ways OLA met these criteria and did very well with its request to increase the Ready to Read grant. The OLA legislative committee made sure that we were organized and had a legitimate claim for an increase in state support. Our request was tangible, and it had the interest and backing of many Oregonians. We were able to celebrate a 50 percent increase in the Ready to Read grants. Our ability to stave off a raid on the State Library's budget by the Justice Department showed how our collective resolve could pay off. Many librarians and library supporters called their legislators voicing OLA's opposition to cutting the State Library's budget. Attorney General Hardy Myers even called me, as OLA president, and apologized.

The one area in which we failed was bridge funding. We came very close to getting some type of interim funding from the legislature, ultimately falling short, but not for lack of effort. Realizing that Measure 47 would devastate many libraries, the Multnomah County Public Library Foundation and their Friends, along with representatives from library institutions, met and discussed the need for limited, one-time bridge funding from the Legislature. We were asking for funding somewhere over the $20 million mark to maintain library services at pre-Measure 47 levels, while vulnerable libraries went back to their local communities to seek new revenues.

Craig Berkman, of the Multnomah County Public Library Foundation and former head of the Oregon Republican Party, took up our cause and helped us rally support. He secured funds from donors to help pay for a major campaign to convince the media and the public that our cause was important. Craig, with the assistance of numerous supporters, arranged mailings, phone banks, a rally at the Capitol, and a state wide media campaign, picking up endorsements from editorial boards across the state. The highlight was a one-day blitz from Portland to Salem, Eugene, Medford, Baker City, and back to Portland. We met with news groups, editorial boards, and local friends and library supporters.

The Legislature responded most positively to those groups who were high profile and well organized, having grassroots support and financial backing. In most ways OLA met these criteria.

Even though we were late in the legislative process, we were given assurances by some of the legislative leadership that our cause would be addressed. However, we must reduce the amount for which we were asking. After discussions with the leadership and the governor's office, it was recommended that we ask only for the funding that would keep library doors open the same hours as they were before Measure 47. Unfortunately, many libraries had already made their cuts by curtailing book purchases and implementing other reductions just to keep their doors open. This limited the number of libraries that could be assured some funding would be provided. We were shocked and gravely disappointed when no bridge funding measure reached the floor. Apparently, in the mayhem of the last three days, with sessions lasting until the early morning hours, confusion took over and misunderstandings multiplied.

During the wee hours, one new funding bill reached the floor, and passed. This measure provided millions to support the horse racing industry, raising the ire of people in all parts of our state. A phrase originally coined by Craig Berkman, "Bucks for books, not bookies," continues to be repeated when and wherever library supporters congregate.

There was a bright side to these events. During the legislative process, OLA did make its presence felt! Legislators stated they had never seen such a huge response over library issues. The fallout from the lack of bridge funding has made a number of legislators feel they owe libraries more support in the future.

See **I Was There** *page 17*

What Happened?

by Carol Hildebrand
Director
Eugene Public Library

Whenever I go to a service club or neighborhood group to talk about the Eugene Public Library, I get two reactions: "What's wrong with Eugene that we can't seem to get a new library? Have you seen the new library at X?" and "Why doncha' just____?" (Fill in the blank with your favorite bright idea.)

Both comments, I think, are illustrative of the reasons EPL has the dubious distinction of failing two bond issue elections in one year by one percent or less.

The history really began with a 12 member citizen planning committee, commissioned by the City Council and working closely with the library board. The committee spent 18 months in 1986-88 on three rounds of public meetings, surveys and response forms, two architects, and a library consultant (lacking only the partridge and pear tree) to recommend a new main library in a central location downtown, followed by branch libraries.

The response of the City Council and then city manager was to propose instead a joint building project with an out-of-state developer on a different site with an elaborate tax-increment financing scheme. Not to anyone's surprise, the 1989 advisory vote failed 4-1, and the proposed office tower was never built.

In 1990, with some new members, the city council decided to investigate the feasibility of remodeling and expanding the just-vacated Sears building at yet a different location downtown. A second round of architectural studies, plans, and public meetings resulted in an advisory vote to purchase the site, but no money for the project was included in the question. In the meantime, Measure 5 had passed, and the council was very concerned (with justification, as it turned out) about its impact on the city's budget. Still, they wanted to do something, so they asked if they should buy the building, with funding to be sought later. In March 1991 this question got a 70 percent yes vote, and the city bought the building. Then nothing happened for two years — except for a steady stream of library patrons asking when construction would start. Of course, they thought they had voted for the money too! In 1993 the City Council decided they had too many boards and commissions and eliminated about 25 of them, including the library board.

If you can't feed 'em,
don't breed 'em!

A new City Council in mid-1993 decided it was time to get back to the library. However, various members were unable to agree on priorities for fire stations, funds for long-delayed major maintenance on city buildings and pools, and a new library building. Some did not think we should build anything new ("If you can't feed 'em, don't breed 'em!").

The only proposal upon which all would agree included everything, for a total of $56.2 million, of which $19 million was for the library. Supporters and staff warned that this large and unfocused a proposal would very likely fail. They urged that at least the components be separate questions if they must be on the same ballot. But some councilors insisted on all or nothing. Rather than risk individual councilor's campaigning against a measure, "all" went on the May 17, 1994 primary ballot.

Supporters launched a strong election campaign. The political action committee was a coalition of 15 community groups, among them the Chamber of Commerce, AFSCME, League of Women Voters, Hispanic Business Association, Eugene Education Association, countywide labor council, Downtown Eugene Inc., and of course the Friends of EPL and EPL Foundation. The campaign included the usual voters' pamphlet statements, mailings and ads, plus a parade, two rallies, and newsletters to the 200 or so volunteers. The mayor campaigned energetically, but most of the City Council stayed out of the race.

This was one of those elections where supporters went to bed ahead by some 400 votes, but when the absentee ballots were tallied the next morning, the measure failed by 336 votes out of 30,856 ultimately cast.

Local pundits had predicted a decisive loss, so losing by only one percent was considered a credit to the campaign. The post-election survey confirmed that, if the issues had been presented separately, the library and fire station would have passed.

So the City Council appointed a subcommittee to prepare a second bond proposal, just for the library, for the general election. Still concerned about operating costs, the subcommittee and city manager decided to add $7 million to the proposal for books and computer equipment for 10 years, plus a construction inflation allowance. They did not consult with supporters or staff (and there was no library board), much less the community. The first time the additional money was discussed in public was in the council meeting certifying the measure for the ballot.

EPL supporters had a little more than 60 days to raise a second campaign fund, recruit volunteers, do all the activities again, and explain to the voters how the project had grown by $7 million in five months.

Active opponents consisted of three men over age 75 who filed their PAC as "No Unfair Taxes" and

See **What Happened** *page 17*

Leadership, Relationships, and Strategy: Keys to Legislative Success in 1997

by Jim Scheppke
State Librarian

As anyone who has worked with the Oregon Legislature in recent years would tell you, achieving a 50 percent increase in a state-funded grant program in one biennium is not easy. Some would say it is impossible. But that's exactly what the Oregon Library Association did in 1997.

Ever since the passage of Ballot Measure 5 in 1990, competition for state general funds derived from the state income tax has been fierce. Measure 5 required that state taxes replace local property taxes as the major funding source for Oregon's public school system. Another initiative in 1994 requiring mandatory prisons sentences for many felons made the situation even worse, since it required a massive expansion of the state corrections system. On top of that, the desire to expand eligibility for Oregon's groundbreaking Oregon Health Plan added more demands on the state general fund.

Even with the remarkable growth of Oregon's economy in recent years, the demands on state funding are greater today than ever before. So how was the OLA able to swim against this gigantic tide and achieve a dramatic increase for the State Library's Ready to Read grant program in 1996?

The first key was leadership. The OLA legislative committee, led by Karyle Butcher, proposed an ambitious goal of funding the Ready to Read grant program at $1 per child (birth to 14). It received the endorsement of the OLA executive board to make the goal OLA's highest priority for the 1997 legislative session. The committee worked closely with OLA President-elect Ed House on a "One to Get Ready" campaign that provided information to local libraries. It also enlisted their help informing local legislators about the important work public libraries were doing to introduce preschool children and their parents to reading and to keep children reading after they entered school.

The second key was relationships. As OLA lobbyist Nan Heim has said again and again, success in politics is all about establishing relationships with political leaders. Something as simple as stuffing envelopes for a few afternoons to help a legislator in his or her campaign creates a lasting relationship that can make all the difference. Such a relationship proved indispensable to OLA's efforts in 1997.

Who would have known that a freshman legislator from Deschutes County would be in a key position to advocate for the Ready to Read grant program? When OLA member Jim Hayden of Redmond volunteered some time to Ben Westlund's campaign for District 55 state representative in the fall of 1996, he established a relationship that would prove invaluable to OLA. As it turned out, Westlund was appointed to the General Government Subcommittee of the Joint Ways and Means Committee that would be hearing the State Library's budget request and making decisions about the Ready to Read grant program. Even though he was a freshman, Westlund quickly established himself as an up-and-coming leader in the Republican caucus and on the Ways and Means Committee.

Another key relationship turned out to be the relationship that Deborah Jacobs and Karyle Butcher had established with state Rep. Barbara Ross of Corvallis. As it turned out, Ross was also appointed to the General Government Subcommittee and was a leader in her Democratic caucus in support of the Ready to Read grant program.

As always, Nan Heim used her excellent relationships with all of the legislators to advocate for the Ready to Read grant program. Nan and her associate Jody Fischer made many visits to key legislators to pave the way for the Ready to Read grant increase.

After leadership and relationships, the third key was strategy. OLA Legislative Day, held just a few weeks into the legislative session, was used as a kick-off for the final push for the "One to Get Ready" campaign. Two opportunities to achieve the funding increase were created in the legislative process. The first would be the State Library's budget bill, HB 5039, that was heard by the General Government Subcommittee. In addition, OLA introduced its own bill in the Senate, SB 509. This bill would make a much needed substantive change in the law governing the Ready to Ready grant program, but it also contained a section to provide additional funding for the program.

OLA Legislative Day was a great success. The turnout of librarians and trustees was excellent, and Nan Heim was able to engineer a hearing in the Senate Education Committee for SB 509 on Legislative Day. The hearing drew a large audience of OLA members and resulted in an enthusiastic endorsement from the Senate Education Committee.

After Legislative Day, there was a break in the action lasting a couple of months. Progress in the early part of the legislative session was slow because many new members and new committee leadership had to do a lot of learning on the job. With Oregon's new term limits law, this will probably become the norm

See **Leadership** *page 20*

Library Levies in Tillamook County

by Sara Charlton
Director
Tillamook County Library

In the March 1997 election, the Tillamook County Library funding levy resulted in a 54 percent turnout, and passed with a 76 percent yes vote. This was both the highest election percentage in Tillamook County history, and the year's highest percentage of library ballot box support in Oregon. This success was not by chance, and I would like to share some of the important lessons that we learned during the process.

At this juncture, a bit of Tillamook County library history seems appropriate.

In 1907, the local Shakespeare Club established a public library for Tillamook City. Discussions about the establishment of a countywide library system had begun by 1915. Subsequent to the establishment of what would become the main library in Tillamook, libraries (now considered branches) were begun in smaller county communities. Bay City opened in 1922, Garibaldi in 1928, and Manzanita in 1930. In 1947 these libraries were incorporated into a county library system. The Pacific City branch, begun in 1971, is our system's late-comer. A Rockaway Beach Friends group has acquired and is presently converting a building into a library branch, which is scheduled to open later this year. Manzanita and Pacific City exist at opposite ends of the county and are our "high volume" branches. We intend to use these magnificent new branch buildings as our "book-end examples" in the planning of a new main library in Tillamook.

By agreement, the creation and maintenance of local branches is the responsibility of the local community. Library personnel, programming, and materials are provided by the county library system.

Bookmobile service began in 1948, serving the rugged rural areas of our 1,100-square-mile county. On average, the bookmobile is either our second or third most active branch.

An old cliché holds that an outsider's point of view is often a good thing. An outsider's point of view is what I brought to Tillamook County when I had the great good fortune to get the director's job in 1991.

I had been the director of a mid sized rural library system in Pennsylvania. There, library funding is on a yearly 50-50 basis, which is more or less equally derived from state and local tax sources. As a consequence, librarians spend much of their time lobbying various taxing authorities in an effort to stay even. Far better than any anecdote I might provide, the current state of Pennsylvania public libraries reflects the unhappy result of this situation.

In Tillamook County, I found things to be quite different including the existence of a very competent, reasonably well-paid, and friendly staff.

I came to work in June 1991, facing a two-year library funding levy scheduled for the March 1992 ballot. At the time there was a good deal of turmoil in, around, and about the library. The previous director had left under unfortunate circumstances and there were adverse commentaries, and dire predictions about the upcoming vote.

I did not take such negative prognostications too seriously. I had quickly discovered that Oregon is as fine a place to be a librarian as it is in which to live. The first Oregon advantage I noted was in the dynamics of patron usage. In the East, where regular library use by about 20 percent of the population is primarily responsible for circulation statistics, librarians soon learn to recognize patrons. Not so in a place like Tillamook County, where half the population now holds a library card and where the library usage rate almost triples the national average. The diversity of our patrons was also a pleasant surprise. With the possible exception of cactus cultivators, we must have someone from every possible vocation living in Tillamook County.

This diversity was typified by reaction to the ongoing library automation process. Patrons often asked questions confirming both the need for automation and for the Coastal Resource Sharing Network, a consortium of computer-linked libraries made possible through automation. Network operation has had the effect of tripling the collections of member libraries.

Such diversity represented the one real problem I had in becoming a "true" Oregon librarian, however. It took me a year to fully appreciate the sophistication of patron interest and attitude as it pertains to book selection. But even this had a peripheral benefit. When dealing with would-be censors, I found that the typical complaining patron understood and would begrudgingly accept my standard reply: "I can sympathize, but if we remove the book you don't like, then everybody has the same right, and there will soon be no books in the library."

Clearly, in Oregon I saw that libraries were important to the grand scheme of things. The Tillamook County Commissioners had always been encouraging and publicly supportive. So had the business community. Even the bad reputation of our one super-curmudgeon patron had a positive effect. I was often stopped on the street, and in effect told, "If so-and-so is against you, we're for you!"

As a consequence of all this, I was pleased but not surprised to see our 1992 funding levy pass with a 66 percent yes vote.

See **Library Levies** *page 19*

Clackamas County Levy 1997

by Nancy Andersen
Board Member
Wilsonville Public Library

Clackamas County libraries have been funded for 20 years by a county-wide renewable serial levy. There are 13 libraries in the county, deriving varying percentages of their total operating budgets from this county levy. The levy in place in 1996 was due to expire July 1, 1997. Since the passage in November of Measure 47, requiring a double majority, we knew we had a monumental task ahead of us. We felt that it should not be applied to this levy, since it was a renewal, not a 'new' tax, but had no assurance that our views would be upheld.

On Saturday, December 7, 1996 a meeting was held to organize a campaign and line up workers to get this levy passed in March 1997. Joanna Rood of LINCC (Library Information Network of Clackamas County) organized the meeting by spreading the word of an organizational meeting regarding passing the levy, to all the libraries in the county. A large number turned out to see and hear what was happening.

There was an opportunity to sign up for various tasks, including the Executive Committee, consisting of a chairperson, PAC treasurer, Secretary, and Chairs of Fundraising committee, Publicity/Collateral Materials committee and Message/Speakers Bureau committee as well as a Library Liaison/Advisor for each of the above. The Fundraising Committee consisted of a chairperson and coordinators of fundraising events, donations solicitation, and "asking influential people for their support"; along with a Library liaison advisor and general 'helpers'. The Message/Speaker's Bureau committee also had a chairperson and a coordinator of speaker's bureau calendar, a Library Liaison advisor, and general 'helpers'. In addition, a Community Captain was designated for each library in the county.

At this meeting, the name of the PAC was decided on: Renew Our Library Levy. We wanted to emphasize the idea that this was not a new, but a continuation or renewal of an existing levy and also wanted a name that would provide us with a good and easy acronym.

It was decided that the Executive Committee would meet weekly. (We had to be careful to hold our meetings in public meeting rooms so we could not be called to task for preferential treatment, lobbying on public time, etc.) The Community Captains were encouraged to attend all Executive Committee meetings and overall the attendance was very good. That way we got input from all the various communities at once so decisions could be made more quickly. Time was of the essence since we had less than four weeks until Voter Pamphlet statements had to be submitted. These, of course, had to be accompanied by payment for same. Friends groups were of great assistance in this.

FUNDRAISING

- The Fundraising Committee went first to Friends groups since they could be counted on in a hurry for support.
- Volunteers and library staff were strongly encouraged to contribute. Literature could legally be placed in staff lounges.
- Unions. OPEU in Wilsonville made donations of cash and time for a demonstration.

PUBLICITY

- Flyer asking for volunteer help and money was first priority. Tear-off sheet provided choices for volunteer activities and donations.
- Flyers developed were handed out at shopping malls and anywhere possible. Signs were posted in all businesses who agreed; also at least one post office approved.
- Message was "50 percent or BUST!" Emphasis on getting 50 percent of voters to vote because without the renewal of the levy, all the county's libraries would be severely curtailed, and some closed.
- One "factual, not too attractive flyer" (which had to be checked minutely by the State Attorney General for propriety) was mass-mailed to all homes in the county by LINCC. ROLL didn't have money for mailing so factual was used with gratitude.
- Lawn sign design was approved and signs ordered. Community captains requested quantity desired and arranged work parties to put them up.
- Reader boards were a good source of publicity in some areas.
- Press releases were sent to radio stations. Radio and TV appearances were secured. Local communities were expected to supply their own newspapers with publicity and information. A series of articles carried in one newspaper was distributed to other communities also.
- A resident of a retirement home printed, at her own expense, flyers and a cover letter which went into every mail box there.
- A saturation mailing to certain zip codes considered to be most effective was done with a post

See **Clackamas County Levy** *page 18*

Making It Happen for Oregon Libraries

by Nan Heim & Jody Fischer
OLA lobbyists

The next session of the Oregon Legislature begins in January, 1999. Oregon Library Association's legislative package for '99 will most likely include:

- Continued opposition to threats to intellectual freedom.
- A $2 per child appropriation to the Children's Services Grants for libraries to help get kids ready to read (now 75 cents).

These are important goals. What will it take to achieve them? For starters, OLA members need to get to know your legislators now, and to make sure legislators get to know the good work done in your libraries.

Why is it so critical to start now? Simple. Once the session begins, the legislators simply do not have time.

We often hear comments such as,"I pay my dues to the association and they hire those lobbyists who are supposed to be looking out for my interests in Salem. Why do I need to get involved?"

Quite simply, you are the real thing! Not only do you know library issues better than anyone, you are also a constituent of at least two state legislators — a representative and a senator. This means you are the most effective spokesperson for your issues and your profession with your own legislators.

Legislators get information from various sources: their colleagues; staff; lobbyists; Governor and state agencies; the media; constituents. Which is the most important source? Constituents - the folks back home - you.

You offer your legislator something no one else can: a clear message about the impact of legislation of his or her constituency. You offer something else as well: a direct connection to people who vote.

We have a recent example of just how strong local librarians' voices can be. In the '97 session, Craig Berkman launched an all-out public relations effort to secure several million in "bridge funding" money from the Legislature to help public libraries hard-hit by Measure 47. The effort failed. Perhaps the number one reason it failed is that some librarians were uncertain about whether it was a good plan. Time after time, legislators we spoke to said, "I haven't heard from my librarians on this," or, even more devastating for bridge funding, "My local librarians don't like this plan." Bridge funding had a vocal champion and a well-funded p.r. effort behind it. What it did not have was the strong, united support of the library community.

The first step towards effectively persuading your legislators is recognizing just how powerful your voice can be.

The second step is recognizing how simple it is to get involved.

Starting a dialogue with your legislator can be as formal as asking for a legislative briefing or as informal as asking a friendly question at a meeting. Here are some suggestions for the timid as well as the brave.

Meeting your Legislator

There is just no substitute for face-to-face communication. Try some of these ideas for meeting your legislator . . .

- Attend a local meeting where your legislator is speaking. Most legislators hold informal no-host breakfasts or other meetings for constituents — usually on Saturday mornings during the session. Go and ask a friendly question about how the session is going.
- Write him or her a note afterwards about how much you appreciated the meeting. No kidding! Over and over again we hear from legislators how much they appreciate thank you notes and how infrequently anyone takes the time to write them.
- Invite your legislator to read to children during a children's story hour at the library. Be sure to take a photo and send it the legislator with a note. Perhaps your friends' group would have a coffee afterwards. Use the occasion to make sure your legislator knows how important state Ready-to-Read grants are to your library.
- Send your legislator a news clipping about your issue with a brief note — not volumes of information, you understand — just a "thought this might interest you." A short note will help insure it will get read, and the newspaper article is an indication that the issue has media attention.
- Write a Letter to the Editor praising your legislator on his or her willingness to sit down and discuss your issue.
- Do the obvious: invite a legislator to coffee to talk about your issues.

Telling your story

Legislators are individuals who come from all walks of life. You will find each is unique — as we all are! Here are some tips for starting that conversation:

- It's fine to bring along a small group of people (one or two others) involved in your issues.

Appoint a chief spokesperson or agree beforehand who will deliver what information.

- Don't be afraid to show passion about your issue! But do remember to be courteous and non-threatening. Never promise support or a contribution in return for a vote. And never threaten opposition if the legislator doesn't agree with you.

- Remember: "All politics is local." Your legislator wants to know what happens in the libraries in his or her district as a consequence of a particular action. Use local examples for your points.

- Ask your legislator for advice on how to pass a piece of legislation. Asking for advice is good for two reasons. It allows a legislator to talk (always a good strategy). And they are in fact some of the best political strategists around.

- Be flexible about an appointment; be on time; write a thank you note after your meeting.

It's an election year . . . volunteer for a campaign!

NOTE: This is a political activity, NOT appropriate on public time. However, it is legal for public employees to campaign on their own time.

Working as a citizen volunteer on a legislative campaign is one of the easiest — and most effective — ways to establish personal contact with your legislator.

Pick a candidate in your area. Do your own research to find one you support. We trust your judgment! And then volunteer — even just a couple of hours of your time can make a real difference.

The best time to call and volunteer is during these time periods: from mid-March through the May 19 primary and from early September through the November 5 General Election. If you don't know the phone number for your candidate, call us at (503) 224-0007. We'll get it for you.

If you are a public employee, you must limit your political activities to your private time. On your own time, as a citizen, it is your right — and your responsibility! — to participate in the political process. On your own time, there are a number of helpful ways you can help a candidate . . .

- Hold a coffee in your home for the candidate to meet voters.

- Organize a group of your colleagues to "fold and stuff" and address envelopes for a campaign mailing. This is an activity which Corvallis-area librarians did for Senator Cliff Trow, who won his re-election campaign and became an ardent champion for library causes.

- Put up lawn signs (at least one on your own lawn!). This can be fun with a group of colleagues.

- Call the campaign office and offer your services. Again, we'll get you the phone number if you don't have it.

We encourage you to get involved in the political process for any candidate you feel will do the best job for the state of Oregon. The important thing for us is to get involved — and see for yourself that you can make a difference!

Another good example is Jim Hayden's volunteer work for the campaign of Ben Westlund in Redmond in the '96 campaign. Westlund won election to the Oregon House, became an active champion of libraries and is now OLA's newest Oregon Legislator of the Year!

Is it worth it?
Here is a review of OLA's accomplishments at the '97 session of the Oregon Legislature . . .

- A 50% increase in state Ready-to-Read grants to public libraries. By the end of this biennium, OLA will have helped secure over $32 million in state and federal funds for local libraries over the last decade.

- Successful opposition to a "raid" on the State Library's operating budget by the State Supreme Court and State Department of Justice. The raid threatened the state agency fee system which funds much of the State Library's operations. And that, in turn, threatened the use of federal library funds throughout the state.

- Successful opposition to proposed measures threatening freedom of expression in our state.

None of this would have happened without the active participation of librarians and library supporters in the political process.

Note
We are always glad to hear from you about your experience meeting with your legislators, or your impressions of candidates in your area. Please call us - Nan and Jody - any time at (503) 224-0007.

Things don't just happen. They are made to happen.

— John F. Kennedy

"Don't Fret, the Voters in Klamath County Have Always Made the Right Decision."

by Andy Swanson
Director
Klamath Falls County Library

When I was asked to relate the story of the passage of our local option levy that is currently funding the Klamath County Library my first thought was that I now had the opportunity to express my appreciation to all our colleagues who contributed to the success of the measure. To those who gave us the inspiration, the tactical and legal advice, copies of handouts and facts sheets, and examples of different documentation required to place a measure on the ballot, thank you. I especially want to thank Ralph Delamarter, former Deschutes County Library Director, for this tactical advice, Gail Warner Director in Josephine for the copies of their fact sheets, Ronnie Budge in Jackson County for the example they provided of a model campaign, and last but not least Jim Scheppke and the staff at the State Library for their vision. The vote was so close in our election that if anyone had done any less it would not have passed. In order for the election to be certified a 17,200 voter turn out was required, approximately 17,400 votes were cast.

The second thought that came to mind in describing the passage of the levy was to make clear that the State Statutes regarding the election laws were careful observed. The handout we received from Lake Oswego dealing with the rights and responsibilities of public employees was very useful in this regard. The literature that was prepared and presentations made by the Library Advisory Board Members and myself were carefully prepared so they would not be interpreted as promoting the levy nor as persuading the voter. Besides, some of you may remember reading in the ALA's 1966 Minimum Standard for Public Library Systems, that "This country should never be presented with the spectacle of a public librarian pleading with such a body for funds."

Fortunately, the law forbids pleading, otherwise I can recall some occasions when I almost succumbed during that period when the ballots were first mailed out and when the Election Clerk unsealed the tabulation equipment. Indeed, up to the time that the ballots were mailed out the events that transpired were part of the election process with which we are all probably far too familiar. The library staff took part in the arduous tasks facilitating public hearings, public notifications, and submitting the appropriate paper work. Then we watched the Political Action Committee - LIFT (Library Improvement for Tomorrow) take shape and implement a campaign to inform and persuade the voter. However, a picture developed during the three week period while the voters had their "mail out" ballots that brought into focus the real impact of the 50% turn out requirement included in Measure 47. A few days before the ballots were mailed out a former County Commissioner, Nell Kuonen, told me "don't fret, the voters in Klamath County have always made the right decision." In retrospect, I see I should have taken her counsel to heart, but during those 21 days in March, I now admit it, I did send out a number of resumes.

The LIFT-PAC monitored how many ballots arrived at the election office each day. We understood from some experts that a peak was to be expected in the number of returns after the fifth day. However, about 800 ballots were returned each of the 21 days that the ballots were out. As the last week approached the community became aware that there might not be enough votes cast to validate the election. In that last week about 30,000 registered voters were either visited or called by dozens of campaign volunteers urging them to get out and do their civic duty. On the first day after the "polls closed", the Election Clerk announced that the required number had been received with about 200 extra, on the second day the Clerk announced that about 250 of the ballots that had been returned by the post office marked "undeliverable" did not have the official stamp of the Post Master, on the third day the Clerk announced that the Department of Elections ruled that the carriers' notes were satisfactory and the election was valid. Nor did the Election Clerk have an easy time determining the number of registered voters in Klamath County. There is a time lag in the mechanism that is used to update the voter rolls. A percentage of the population not only moves in and out of the county, but within the county as well, and do not notify the Election Clerk.

This was the first time the voters in Klamath County were asked if they would pay extra taxes to support their library. The importance they placed on the question was reflected when at least half of them turned out to vote, and 74% of those voted yes. If you asked me what I think will be the voters response in the year 2,000 I would quote the former County Commissioner, "Don't fret, the voters have always made the right decision." However, the text of the question the voters may see next time will be complicated by the formula that Measure 50 has established that requires local option levies to reduce their revenue before entities with a permanent tax base.

This country should never be presented with the spectacle of a public librarian pleading with such a body for funds.

Gift

(continued from page 2)

The mayor and city manager also used some very effective non-traditional methods of getting information to the public. Mayor Verger planned two tapings by the local public access television station. One was a half-hour roundtable discussion giving objective information about the building expansion, the use of urban renewal money, and the advisory question itself. An experienced facilitator agreed to lead the group, which consisted of the city manager, library board chair, project architect, and me. The city attorney stood by to make sure all information discussed was purely objective in nature! The second taping was an hour-long "Walk Through the Library," very capably narrated by the mayor, with participation by me and two other staff members. The unrehearsed program was taped at different times during the same day, capturing the variety of library users and activities. Both segments aired frequently on the public access TV channel during the entire election period. Public feedback indicated that both programs were seen and positively received by large numbers of people.

Each week the city manager issues the Friday Update, a brief information sheet to the City Council containing capsule descriptions of city activities. He included something in the Friday Update about the building proposal or the ballot measure every week, beginning with the council's initial approval of the advisory question. The Friday Update is mailed to many individuals, made available in the library in print format, and appears on the city's Web page. It is also sent via electronic mail to a growing list of community residents. This e-mail communication has proven to be very effective for the city, winning an award for excellence from the League of Oregon Cities. Items from the publication are often picked up by the news media. It proved a very effective tool for educating voters about the library.

Library staff participated in the effort to disseminate objective information. A fact sheet was created and distributed in the library, as well as to community groups such as Rotary and to employee groups and retail customers through the cooperation of various businesses and organizations. In all, over 3,000 fact sheets were distributed. The fact sheet also appeared on the library's Web page. Talks were given at meetings of various organizations; television and radio interviews were held. Library staff fielded many questions about the project, which seemed a good sign that public awareness had been heightened.

A preliminary building design created by project architect Richard P. Turi and was used in all aspects of the campaign. It was displayed in the library, at city hall, and at community meetings. Copies of it appeared in the city's newsletter, in *The World* newspaper, and on the library's Web page. It can still be viewed at http://coos.or.us/~cblib. During the course of the campaign, everyone involved found themselves putting out "brush fires," answering concerns that arose from the public. Some were addressed in one-on-one conversations. Others needed widespread coverage. Many of the questions had been anticipated and were addressed in the fact sheet and in campaign material but needed to be discussed again. There were questions about urban renewal financing, and the fact that no new tax was involved needed to be emphasized. The differences between the current project and the larger project cut short a year earlier needed to be explained. There was confusion over the relationship between city funding for a library building and countywide library district funding for library operations, especially at a time when library services had been cut due to Measure 50.

When November 3 had come and gone, the city Urban Renewal Agency took the strong affirmative vote as a mandate to move forward immediately with the proposed expansion. The project is well on its way, and construction is scheduled to begin in May 1998. The wide margin of approval at the polls also demonstrates that the community feels strong general support for the library, a fact that will prove beneficial in many ways. The whole experience showed the importance of building a core of dedicated supporters, as well as identifying and encouraging community members ready to advocate for their library when the need arises.

Forming a District

(continued from page 5)

also on the ballot, and the library district board spoke out loudly against it. The library district tax base was finally approved by the voters on November 6, 1990. One local paper caught the irony of the passage of the library tax base along with the passage of Measure 5. Cameron Brandt asked in a November 21, 1990 *News-Times* editorial: "Why . . . did 14 of the precincts that voted to give the Lincoln County Library District a $416,466 tax base also vote for the passage of Measure 5, a property tax rate cap expected to cause deep cuts in municipal library services?"

According to Brandt, of the other 19 precincts involved in the district, three voted for the district's tax base and against Measure 5, five voted against both the tax base and Measure 5, and 10 voted against the tax base and for Measure 5. One precinct voted for the tax base and tied over Measure 5.

NOT THE END OF THE STORY

The library district board was thrilled that the tax base measure passed and that they were assured funding in 1991-92 but the tax revenue would not be received until late November or early December 1991. They had to decide when to hire a director, develop a contract for the director, advertise the position, conduct interviews, and hire someone. They were continuing to work on an intergovernmental agreement with the cities that would allow fee-free service to people living in the county/district. Insurance for the district and staff was needed. They needed to develop the 1991-92 budget. Funding to tide the district over until November was also needed.

Believe it or not, all of this was accomplished by July 1, 1991. They had hired help for some parts of the process, but the majority of the work was done by this volunteer board of directors. Lidman did much of the work of a director when she served as board president. After her resignation from the board, she was awarded a professional services contract with the library district and continued with this effort.

The members of the board in 1990-91 were Margaret Drescher, president; Fredda Butler; Carol Fisher; and Anne Swinehart, secretary pro tem. Susan Garner and Bette Owens filled vacancies. Board members met with library boards and city councils in their efforts to get intergovernmental agreements approved. They developed a very professional and lasting contract for a library director. They applied for and received an LSCA grant, and they basically spent many hours out in the community talking about the library district.

Of course, others played a strong role in the success of the district. The local librarians, Blythe Jorgenson (Toledo), Carole Dickerson (Newport), Patty Heringer (Lincoln City), Jane Appling (Newport), Janet Webster (Guin Library, Hatfield Marine Science Center), and others were an integral part of the whole process. The support, participation, and leadership roles taken on by the local librarians really made the formation of the library district possible. County Counsel, Wayne Belmont, has continued to give his support to the library district, with the approval of the county commissioners. The others involved with this process are too numerous to name.

The intergovernmental agreements that were approved by most of the cities after about a year and a half of work also helped give the libraries and the library district direction. Contracts were offered to all of the cities. The city of Yachats turned it down. The city of Waldport signed a contract and received funding for a year before the city was annexed into the library district. The cities of Newport, Toledo, and Lincoln City all signed contracts by July 1991. Siletz was the only city annexed into the library district, November 6, 1990. It also signed a contract.

Efforts continued to annex the cities of Waldport, Depoe Bay, and Yachats into the library district. Annexation of the city of Waldport was placed on the November 1991 ballot and was defeated. Annexation measures for the cities of Waldport and Depoe Bay were placed on the May 1992 ballot, this time they passed. The extra effort put forth by citizens in both communities made these successes possible. Yachats is the only city that still has not placed the annexation issue on a ballot. The Yachats City Council has agreed to put it on a ballot "some time in the future" several times, but no date has ever been set.

The Lincoln County Library District Board hired me as the first director. I began working for the district on July 8, 1991. I had moved to Oregon from the Weber County Library System, Utah, in January 1991 and took a temporary position as a reference librarian at Linfield College. That job was fun and helped me realize that I really did want to continue working in Oregon. Serving as the district librarian has been very interesting. This is an exciting position that is constantly changing. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to play a role in the development of the Lincoln County Library District.

We have accomplished many things since July 1991. But that is another story. Give us a call to find out more.

What Happened?

(continued from page 8)

abbreviated on their signs as "NUTS," but they were enough. The increased amount in the projet- strengthened their anti-city and anti-tax approach, especially with over-60 voters.

Moreover, Lane County Elections had converted its computer system over the summer and was unable to supply registered voter labels until just before the absentee ballots went into the mail.

Eugene Public Library has heroic supporters. The November measure garnered 24,527 votes (or almost 10,000 more than in May) but this time it failed by 135 votes out of 49,189 cast — about one third of one percent. Again, the absentee ballots made the difference. And this City measure was the very last item on a ballot containing 20 state ballot measures, other local measures, and candidates. More than 1,800 voters failed to address it.

So what did we learn? The quality of your relationship with political leaders and the quality of their leadership are critical. As my favorite local leader says, "Just because they got elected to the City Council doesn't mean they understand politics."

Don't assume the voters will remember anything — at least anything positive — from previous planning, research, public input, or decisions. Each time you return to an issue, you have to start from the beginning. At least in Eugene, before people are willing to hear about an issue, they have to be listened to. Never mind that their bright ideas have been rehashed repeatedly. These folks either did not notice or were not here at the time. People in Eugene do not readily accept expert opinion. You must not only ask for and consider input, but make sure to do it visibly and tell everybody repeatedly that you are!

This is not news but bears emphasis: The campaign is too late to convince anyone. Persuasion must come before a proposal makes the ballot. The measure must be straightforward and clearly defined. If an explanation is required, it is doomed. With vote-by-mail, the campaign is even more important. If you do not get all the yes votes in, your issue will be decided by those folks who have nothing to do but look at that ballot on their kitchen table for two weeks. And with current law, absentee ballots make primary and general elections into de facto vote-by-mail.

At least we don't give up. In 1998, with new City Council interest and a new city manager, we are beginning a new citizen planning committee to begin a new planning process from scratch. Stay tuned.

I Was There

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We owe much to Nan Heim and Craig Berkman for their hard work. In the next session, OLA must clearly define its goals, submit the measures we support early, and encourage our legislative champions in their efforts. The legislative committee is already working on a legislative agenda.

With the library community speaking with one voice, we will surely gain the support we need and deserve.

Ed House is the Director of the Albany Public Library and was the 1996-97 OLA president, during the past legislative session. Ed had the unique experience of being the only OLA president so far to be involved in flying (in a private plane) to several press conferences around the state in one day!

Clackamas County Levy

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card bearing the message "Your vote counts more than ever! Remember to return your ballot by March 11th."

- Mark Hatfield endorsed the campaign and an ad was purchased in the *Oregonian* using his letter and picture.

- Ads were placed in local newspapers.

Speakers Bureau

- Organized people to speak to groups. Prepared sample speeches.

- Communities did their own scheduling of speaking to School Boards, parent groups and local service clubs.

Get Out The Vote (GOTV) Committee

- A 'computer whiz' was located who could compile phone numbers from registrar's lists for little money. (Later the Union said they had voters' phone numbers and would have shared them with us. Since the other plan was already in effect, we didn't follow up to find particulars of this offer, but it is something to keep in mind if needed again.)

- Names were divided into three groups: those who 'always vote' (who were not called), those who 'sometimes vote' and those who 'never vote'. "Sometimes vote" was targeted.

- Two callings were scheduled. Sites to be used were arranged in local areas by community captains. Insurance companies and banks often good sites. Times were 6-9 PM weekdays and some weekend times.

- A script was prepared, along with instructions for callers, which included having them mark the lists to indicate support for Libraries in order to have names to form a volunteer pool for the future.

- With lots of absentee voting now, those people contacted who expected to be out of town were given instructions for receiving ballots at vacation addresses.

- Postcards were sent with a "Have you returned your ballot?" message to the non-voters.

There was last minute optimism when the Attorney General handed down an opinion that a renewing levy should not be considered a new tax; and therefore not require the 50 percent voter turnout. The actual turnout was 41.32 percent (more than twice the turnout in the last levy election) and 72.8 percent approval. Of course this still was quite short of the 50 percent turnout requirement (presuming the voter rolls were actually current, which from our phoning experience, seemed dubious). However, on the strength of the Attorney General's opinion, the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners tentatively declared the measure passed.

Post election activity included a statement in the voters pamphlet endorsing the proposed rewrite of Measure 47. Also a complaint was filed with the Secretary of State about the voter rolls in Clackamas County. And of course there was some inevitable fallout which left some people saying "you lied to us . . . you never would have closed the libraries." Letters were sent to editors to attempt to explain this.

Aided by a very good and powerful lobbyist, the rewrite of Measure 47, which came to be Measure 50, included specific and clear language relative to renewing levies. To wit: levies, as such, are no more. All taxes collected go into the general fund of the taxing agency to be dealt with at that level. Passage in May of this measure also resolved any remaining doubt about our levy by specific language.

We here in Clackamas County are fortunate in that our Board of County Commissioners have always been strong advocates and supporters of libraries. They have agreed to allocate to the libraries 14 percent of the total property tax collected for five years. This comes very close to duplicating the old levy, which had to be renewed every three years. The funding level is almost as good as it was before '47' and gives us the stability to plan and budget operations.

This campaign was a demonstration of excellent collaboration and hard work by many volunteers on a very tight time schedule. The work done by two of the volunteers earned them the Olé awards at the OLA 1997 conference.

Library Levies

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Planning for the 1994 levy commenced during the preceding autumn. Changes related to increased costs and long-range planning were now apparent. Long-range planning is restricted by the fixed amount provided by the levy process and requires the creation of alternate operating scenarios.

In our case, health insurance costs had increased, the employees' union would be negotiating a new contract, and our weary old bookmobile, then being towed in once a month, had to be replaced.

We finally decided that a three-year levy would be the most practical solution to our problems.

Having learned that Oregonians are open minded, I set up a "Talk to Sara" schedule at the branches, arranged to be interviewed on local radio, and made myself available to any group willing to listen to a real-live librarian. I had by this time discovered that many patrons did not know precisely how the library was funded. A presumption existed, due in part to a confused funding history as well as to the archaic wording of the mail-in ballot, that the library would remain open even if the levy failed.

I used every opportunity to correct this misunderstanding, and the ballot was rewritten.

A few patrons felt they were being threatened or intimidated by this. No one wanted to admit that *their* library might close. Hostility to a vaguely worded school bond on the same ballot also complicated matters. The local paper's editorial finally put the issue in perspective. "If the levy fails, the library closes." The school bond subsequently failed by a wide margin, while the library levy passed with a 58 percent yes vote.

I have come to realize that candor and our clarification of ballot language was nothing more than an anticensorship exercise. Every librarian should be able to support this concept. If taxpayers are asked to vote yes for library funding, they must be allowed to know what a no vote would mean.

The impending chaos threatened by Measure 47 prompted vigorous preparations for the 1997 library levy. The 50 percent voter requirement was a special concern. As it turned out, patron concerns about the new statute's effect on their library had a positive effect. The Tillamook Bay Community College, to which we now provide full library service, energetically provided information on the theme "If the library closes, we lose our accreditation." Library Friends' groups in every community made calls, put up posters, and paid for advertising which included cable TV announcements. Notices went out in newsletters and accompanied water bills.

The county commissioners remained outspokenly supportive and, within the legal limits, encouraged my efforts. I was again interviewed on local radio and soon lost track of how many groups I addressed. Although not able to solicit a yes vote, I was able to respond to often pertinent questions. Our local paper ran features and highlighted a library branch each week prior to the mail-in ballot's due date.

The resulting 76 percent yes vote speaks for itself. Our success has also stimulated planning for our new main library. For months, people I didn't know, and sometimes couldn't recall meeting, would come to offer congratulations, and proclaim, "We did it!" They were right. This kind of reaction serves to emphasize and underline my creed as a librarian: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEANS PUBLIC SUPPORT!

Leadership

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in the future. But things did pick up in late March when the State Library's budget hearing was scheduled. As usual, OLA was there to testify, and their testimony concentrated on the Ready to Read grant program.

OLA's excellent strategy was to try to give the General Government Subcommittee members a real taste of how local libraries used Ready to Read funds. The most compelling testimony came from Angie Johnson of the Canby Public Library. Angie was a library aide whose job was to take Ready to Read grant-funded books and story programs out to local child care facilities, including many with predominantly Spanish-speaking and low-income children.

Angie brought examples of the library materials that she took to the day care sites and told about her own background of growing up in a Spanish-speaking household where books were not available. Any subcommittee members who were not already convinced of the importance of Angie's work, and the work of many other children's library staff in Oregon, were certainly convinced by the time her testimony was over.

Through the leadership on the General Government Subcommittee of Rep. Westlund and Ross, the committee approved a recommendation to increase funding for the Ready to Read grant program from 50 cents per child to 75 cents per child, a 50 percent increase. At the subcommittee's recommended funding level, the grant program would for the first time exceed the million dollar mark, a total of $1,058,632 for the biennium.

The March budget hearing proved to be the highlight of the session and the fulfillment of the OLA's successful legislative strategy. But the game was not over. The recommendation of the General Government Subcommittee languished in the full Ways and Means Committee. This caused some anxious moments for Nan Heim and the legislative committee. However, they were continually reassured by their legislative "champions," Rep. Westlund and Ross, that all would be well in the end. And it was. On June 30, 1997, HB 5039, carried by Rep. Westlund, passed unanimously in the House. On July 2, 1997, the bill passed the Senate, also by a unanimous vote.

The success of OLA in achieving a 50 percent increase for the Ready to Read grant program is a textbook case of how to be successful in the Oregon Legislature. It takes bold and committed leadership, strong relationships with key legislators, and wise political strategy. Leadership and strategy are perhaps the easiest to come by. Oregon is blessed with many fine library leaders, and OLA's lobbyist Nan Heim is one of the best political strategists in Salem.

The relationships are the trickiest element to supply to the equation, simply because, with 90 members in the Legislature, you never can be sure who you will need to be a champion. It was mostly good luck that Rep. Westlund and Ross were in the right place at the right time for OLA in 1997. If OLA wants to rely less on luck in the future, OLA members must heed Nan Heim's advice and work hard to cultivate every legislator to be a potential champion for libraries.