

The Washington Library  
Association Journal

July 2018

Volume 34 | Number 2

# Alki

## What No One Ever Tells You About Working in Libraries

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"Alki," a Native American word meaning "by and by," was suggested by Nancy Pryor, Special Collections at Washington State Library, as the title for the Washington Library Association's journal. "Alki" is also the state motto, signifying a focus on the future.

**Alki** (ISSN: 8756-4173) is published online three times per year in March, July, and November.

**Alki's** purpose is to communicate philosophical and substantive analyses of current and enduring issues for and about Washington libraries, personnel, and advocates, and to facilitate the exchange of research, opinion, and information.

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Craig Seasholes

## A Marathon, Not a Sprint

by Craig Seasholes

*What nobody tells you includes...* that librarianship and our professional association's efforts are both a relay and a marathon, run on a circular track. As school libraries are wrapping up another school year, our public library partners are ramping up for summer reading programs. I know that in my school, summer reading orientations often have a distinct feel of "passing the baton" to my public library partner.

Likewise, as many of us "hit our stride" in service to WLA committee and leadership responsibilities, it is also time for everyone to be looking ahead with an eye to who will carry it forward in upcoming elections and ongoing committee participation.

I encourage everyone to take a moment to consider how service to our association can enhance your professional life.

It is also true that asking and encouraging other people to step forward may be the most impactful thing we can do to strengthen our team. Look ahead and around at your colleagues and use our August 1st nominations deadline as an opportunity to add strength and motivation to our WLA team.

*What nobody tells you includes...* that no matter where you are working someone else outside of your organization is doing something that could make your work easier, better. Time spent forging a professional learning network pays dividends. Investing time in our state association work, participating in wider public communicating forums through articles, blogs, and tweets all help us connect with others in ways we have no way to anticipate.

A case in point: when I presented our WLA library ecosystem to an ALA/AASL webinar recently, I had a desire for a layered map view of all WA libraries. It turns out that the Washington State Library (WSL) was on that same effort, with a current map showing academic, public and special libraries. <http://www.washingtoncenterforthebook.org/libraries-in-washington/>. The final layer, of school library information is coming, with WLA membership committee and WSL working on an updated all-schools list to identify which WA schools employ librarians.

**“ ...asking and encouraging other people to step forward may be the most impactful thing we can do to strengthen our team. ”**

*What nobody tells you includes...* that advocacy never ends. When WLA achieved a significant victory for school library funding in SB 6362, it was only another milestone on a long road of advocacy. Because legislative allocations are not directives or explicit mandates, our \$20/FTE for library materials victory is at

best a compelling advocacy tool to engage district leadership, school boards and the education community of the opportunities for serving students through strong school library information technology programs.

*What nobody tells you includes...* that following your interests is a highly developed instinct for librarians. It's something that

I see in WLA Legislative Committee member Samantha Hines Associate Dean of Instructional Resources, Peninsula College who is participating in the ALA Policy Corps <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/ala-policy-corps>.

It is evident in Waylon Robert, a student at The Evergreen State College who helped secure \$250,000 in state funding to help restore a rural library in Grays Harbor County and continued by consulting with our state Librarian Cindy Aden, Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation head Allyson Brooks, Rep. Brian Blake, and various other stakeholders to help secure an \$80K operating proviso for a capital needs-assessment for all libraries in the 21 distressed counties.

And it is her interest in intellectual freedom and diversity that earned iSchool MLIS student Dovi Mae Patino the 2018 Gordon M. Conable Conference Scholarship to cover her expenses to attend the 2018 Annual Conference FTRF meeting, meetings of other ALA intellectual freedom groups, and intellectual freedom programs.

And for my own part, I hope to hear more from all over our WLA library ecosystem so that we can strengthen our service to the communities we serve. I hope the articles in this issue and the efforts of others help inspire and energize you in our WLA marathon relay team. 📖

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Craig Seasholes is the president of WLA and a teacher-librarian in Seattle



Sheri Boggs

# A Crash Course in Library Life

by Sheri Boggs

I was two weeks into my first librarian job when the unthinkable happened. A raccoon had crawled into the library's HVAC system and died, and as staff argued with the city's maintenance guy for several days about whether or not the smell was getting worse (IT WAS), the raccoon's partner crawled into the HVAC and expired as well. As the days wore on, my new librarian optimism quickly unraveled into bewilderment. At the worst of it, I remember at least one patron on the public computers typing with one hand while shielding their nose with the other, maggot sightings, and a library assistant who wept through the most odiferous staff meeting ever. Most of all I remember my shock that we were staying open under such conditions.

"Shouldn't we close?" I asked the library manager.

"The public depends on us to be open," she crisply responded. "And until the health department says we need to close we're going to stay open."

That was my introduction to one of the many realities that weren't covered in library school. Since then I've learned that libraries are bastions of not only intellectual freedom but of access, welcome, and yes, reliability. While my MLIS has been indispensable, I've learned just as much (if not more) from my day-to-day work than from any class or training. And, if submissions to this issue are any indication, I'm not the only one. From pages on up to library directors, this issue's theme -- "What No One Ever Tells You About Working in Libraries" -- really resonated and your stories kept coming in.

Not surprisingly, many of the stories are humorous. Olympia-area librarians Nono Burling, Julie Nurse, and Kelsey Smith have between the three of them held almost every library job imaginable in the South Sound. They dish about the many things they wish they'd learned in library school and offer their take on a new and improved "syllabus" (p. 7). In a similar vein, library work is compared to bartending (p. 14), social work (p. 15), and Calvinball (p. 10). And speaking of humor, if you've ever looked at the WLA Annual Conference program and wondered what the kittens "Society Gaius Julius Solinus v. Washingtonius" was, wonder no more (p. 12).

Some of your stories celebrate the practical education that comes from stepping up to get the job done. Dusty Waltner, director of the Columbia County Rural Library District, reflects on how her

position at a small, rural district encompasses all the jobs: collection development, programming, weeding, reference, circ, and even a tiny bit of local celebrity (p. 15). We also see how duties were recently juggled behind the scenes at Gonzaga University's Chastek Law Library (p. 25), and how moving from a paraprofessional to a professional position in Technical Services is an education unto itself (p. 17).

Sometimes we form close bonds with our colleagues and patrons and that's when library work can be bittersweet. Miriam Wnuk finds that mentoring young employees is not unlike being an aunt (p. 21), and Suzanne Carlson-Prandini interviews an Outreach Services provider on the grief that sometimes accompanies this important work (p. 20).

One thing that those new to the profession quickly learn is how many opportunities there are to do really exciting work for their communities. The Everett Public Library's experiments in podcasting are turning out some fantastic content (p. 28), and the last weekend in February is quickly becoming the kid lit event of the year in Northwest Washington with the annual Children's Literature Conference and nErDcamp Bellingham (p. 32). And Samantha Hines explores the professional challenges of serving on ALA's Policy Corps (p. 22).

In our regular features, John Sheller wraps up the 2018 legislative session (p. 5), and Kari Whitney shares how social media is a way to keep Library Snapshot Day alive all year (p. 33). The Puget Sound Council for the Review of Children's and Young Adult Literature takes a look at new STEM titles perfect for summer experiments (p. 36) and David Wright pulls back the curtain on the arcane (and deeply satisfying) art of weeding (p. 38). And of course no issue would be complete without checking in on the Swellville Public Library, whose HR department has just updated their training plan (p. 39)!

Finally, WLA President Craig Seasholes points out that library work and WLA work are both endurance events that never reach the finish line (p. 3). The vitality of our organizations depends on our ability to not only pass the baton but to recognize when it's our turn to accept it. As you browse this issue, consider if there are areas of WLA involvement you'd like to explore. I promise you that association engagement is as rewarding as it is educational, and there is no end to the things you can learn. 📖

Sheri

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*Sheri Boggs is the Youth Collection Development Librarian for the Spokane County Library District and editor of ALKI.*



## WLA Legislative Committee 2018: A Beginning and an End

Compiled by John Sheller with significant contribution from Carolyn Logue

The 2018 Legislative Session marked a new beginning for WLA's Legislative Committee, mirroring the Association's revised structure of four divisions made up of members from Academic, Public, School and Special libraries. Additionally, we were joined by our State Librarian / WLA Federal Relations Coordinator Cindy Aden; and two actively engaged i-School students, who joined our weekly issue briefings and participated in WLA Library Day in Olympia.

Please join me in thanking the 2018 Legislative Committee for their service:

- Christina Pryor, Academic Library Division
- Samantha Hines, Academic Library Division
- Aileen Luppert, Public Library Division
- Liz Dodds, School Library Division
- Laura Edmonston, Special Libraries Division
- Dovi Mae Patino, University of Washington i-School
- Bethany Ellerbrook, University of Washington i-School



*"The real learning happens outside of the books." Credit: State Library of New South Wales.*

The newly reformed committee was co-chaired by WLA President Craig Seasholes and myself, John Sheller of the King County Library System; with association support from WLA Executive Director Kate Laughlin. WLA lobbyist Carolyn Logue rounded out the roster with her advice, counsel and on-the-ground efforts that led to a number of positive results for libraries this year.

Carolyn Logue submitted her full report to the WLA, a whopping 9-page document of legislative issues and proposed bills that the committee discussed, tracked, and in some cases took direct action on. Carolyn's full report is available online at <http://www.wla.org/library-related-legislation>

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*John Sheller is Government Relations Manager with the King County Library System; Carolyn Logue, CA Logue Public Affairs, is the Washington Library Association Lobbyist.*

2018 also marked the end of the 65th Legislature, the official term for the 2017-2018 legislative biennium. Here are few highlights of the bills that passed through the legislative process and have been signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee.

**SSB 6362 Basic Education Funding.** Included in this education funding bill was an important distinction for school libraries - the addition of a line item allocating \$20 per student statewide specifically for library materials. Prior to this, school library materials

were not called out in school budgets as essential curriculum components and were instead categorized with miscellaneous school supplies.

**Effective Date: June 7, 2018**

**SHB 2282 Net Neutrality.** In response to the well-publicized Federal Communications Commission's repeal of consumer protections that prohibited internet service providers (ISPs) from adopting multiple internet service, internet speed, and internet access / content levels, the state legislature adopted this measure to prohibit ISPs operating in Washington from:

- blocking content, applications, services, or nonharmful devices;

*continued on next page*

- impairing or degrading ("throttling") traffic on the basis of content, application, service, or use of nonharmful devices; or
- favoring some traffic over others in exchange for benefit ("paid prioritization").

Regulation of the internet actually resides at the federal level, and congressional action currently taking place will likely ultimately resolve this issue. But for now, this has been adopted as state law.

**Effective Date: June 7, 2018\***

\*Or at the effective date of the federal order repealing equivalent federal rules.

**SHB 2822 Service Animal Misrepresentation.** This bill brings the state's legal definition of a service animal into alignment with the federal definition, limiting bona fide service animal designation to "dogs and miniature horses," which by law are considered trainable to perform an adaptive service.

Libraries and other public entities have often dealt with disruptions caused by untrained animals being referred to as trained service animals by pet owners. This new law provides legal backing to generally accepted limits of pets in libraries. It passed with no opposition and, in addition to WLA, was supported by representatives of the disabled community; numerous associations; the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment; and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

**Effective Date: June 7, 2018**

**SSB 5064 Student Freedom of Expression.** This First Amendment win for student journalists was supported by WLA as related to the ALA Library Bill of Rights, which asserts among other things that "Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas."

The purpose of this law is to shield student journalists from censorship by school administrations; and also to protect school administrations from liability by clarifying that student-generated content may not be misconstrued as official school policy, and further that: "School officials or the governing board are not legally responsible for school sponsored media, unless the school official or the governing board interfered with or altered the content of the media."

**Effective Date: June 7, 2018**

- Additionally, there were some library wins in the supplemental operating budget, including:

- \$250,000 is appropriated for the Secretary of State's office to hire two staff people to digitize state library materials for wider accessibility and to further develop the online teacher portal.
- \$80,000 was appropriated to facilitate a capital needs assessment study of public libraries in distressed counties – including the library facility backlogs and local funding capacities for both non-historic and historic libraries.
- \$900,000 is appropriated from to enable more student access to digital learning through the e-rate program.
- \$100,000 was appropriated for K-12 Open Educational Resource grants
- \$100,000 was appropriated to expand access to electronic Braille display technology at the Washington State School for the Blind

That's a lot for the "short" session of our state's two-year legislature. Fall of 2018 will bring midterm elections, with all of the state House of Representative seats and half of the state Senate seats up for election. January 2019 will seat a brand new 66th Legislature and mark the start of the next two-year cycle.

If you are interested in learning more about the WLA Legislative Committee and how you can participate please contact Kate Laughlin at the WLA Office; we'd love to have you involved. 

## The Things We Didn't Learn in Library School

by Nono Burling, Julie Nurse, and Kelsey Smith

By way of introduction, we are Nono, Julie, and Kelsey, three librarians living in Olympia, Washington. As Washington's state capital, Olympia is home to numerous government agencies, two colleges, and the headquarters to a large public library system. As a result of this, we have all been presented with many unique and interesting employment choices. Over the years, we've joked about all of the things we should have learned in library school, but didn't. This summer's *Alki* theme, "What No One Ever Tells You About Working in Libraries," provided us with an opportunity to collaborate that we couldn't refuse.

With a plan to jointly write this article, we met up one evening for drinks and brainstorming. We began with a discussion of how we envisioned our working life as Dewey-eyed (pun intended) librarians-in-training. We ended with a tongue-in-cheek syllabus for the library school course we wished we'd had (pg. ). Although each of our library career paths have intersected and diverged over the years, we have always agreed on a common thread: "Expect the unexpected."

We all agreed that in library school, our theory classes were deadly and we didn't understand why we had to slog through so many of them. We wanted to learn how, not why. Ironically, now that we are well into our careers, we find that the theoretical concepts we learned inform our professional work every day. We find ourselves constantly navigating the concepts of privacy, library "neutrality," and intellectual freedom in the age of

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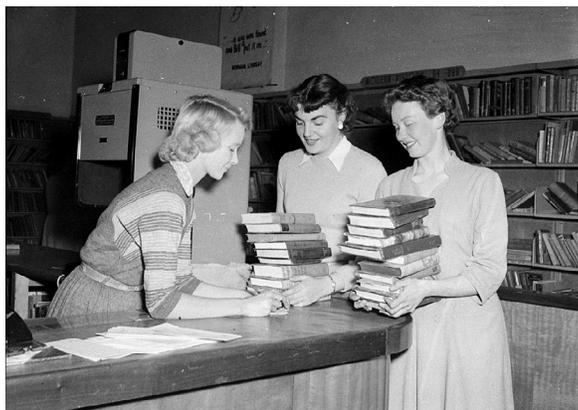
*Nono Burling graduated from the Emporia State University SLIM program in 2006 and has worked in Public, Academic, and Special libraries, currently adding Government to her library quiver, by serving as the Outreach Librarian for the Washington State Library.*

*Julie Nurse received her MLS from North Carolina Central University in 1997. She has worked in Public, Academic, and Special libraries and is the Director of Centralia College Kirk Library.*

*Kelsey Smith graduated from the Emporia State University SLIM program in 2006 and has worked for the Timberland Regional Library district ever since. She's currently the Adult Services Librarian Senior at the Lacey Timberland Library.*

the internet, social media, fake news, Google, and Amazon, for users who largely don't share the library's privacy concerns. The daily challenges we experience have been well served by our profession's theoretical foundations, even as we adapt and shift from those foundations to make our way through these new frontiers.

Another big topic involved boundaries. Our daily interactions with the public make us, to some degree, local celebrities. We often find ourselves seen as librarians first, despite our other community engagements and self-identities when we're not at work. This can be a double-edged sword. As a public librarian, Kelsey has found that having "HEY LIBRARY LADY" yelled down the street by an inebriated regular can be disconcerting, but it's also comforting to know that the street community appreciates what we do and will generally have our backs when needed because of our respectful and helpful nature when we're at our jobs.



*The real learning happens outside of the books.*

Safety was another topic that we didn't recall being discussed in school. Every quarter, Julie spends a chunk of her library budget hiring security for a finals

week "Late Night in the Library" program. Kelsey's first public library employed a full-time security guard, due to the realities of being a heavily used library in a small urban community. She then moved to another urban library without security, because it was determined that its proximity to the police station made a security guard unnecessary. We have all learned how to deescalate tense situations, recognize security incident reports in the making, and deal with biohazards including needles and bodily fluids. These skills are every bit as much a part of our jobs as providing tech assistance, book suggestions, programming, and reference assistance.

There are also endless practical skills we wish we'd learned; how to drive a bookmobile, unclogging an overflowing toilet when facilities can't be reached, and filling out long government forms (including the FAFSA and complex Visa forms for foreign countries). Space allocation is also rarely taught in library school. While working at the WSU Energy Library, Nono was tasked with shifting the entire collection. The A shelves needed to move to Z, and vice versa. Not only did her muscles get a workout, but it was a logistical puzzle. She

*continued on next page*

began with only three empty shelves and two bookcarts. Each shelf had to be carefully mapped before anything was moved so the books would end up in the right place. That was an intellectual along with a physical workout!

We were all surprised at what a large part of our jobs involved administrative tasks. While employed with the WSU Energy Library, the library lost funding for a period of time. Nono found herself doing whatever tasks needed to be done, which included sorting and distributing mail, shipping packages for the entire building, and even transcribing telephone calls. Meanwhile, Julie (also at the WSU Energy Library) was tasked with managing state grants that facilitated the allocation of energy efficiency monies to state industries like logging, solar, food packaging and wineries. This serendipitously allowed her to visit several awesome Washington state wineries! (Perks of the job!) Then there is the booking of meeting rooms -- how many hours have we all devoted to that task? And emails. So. Many. Emails. Learning how to tame the email beast is probably one of the best skills any librarian can have.

Sometimes working at a reference desk can lead to uncomfortable situations. Julie, while working in the virtual reference department at a public library, had a patron who would regularly phone in for sexually oriented anime images. Nono helped a man who walked into the library needing a picture of "his girlfriend" Scarlett Johansson. She found the one he liked, printed it off, and with mission accomplished he blissfully walked back out the door. And we've all experienced that crushing moment when we receive an email with a sex offender notification and discover one of our patrons' faces in the mix.

Public librarians must constantly navigate the challenge of providing service to all patrons, which often puts the needs of our users at odds. One cold and wet Sunday afternoon when Julie was working as the "in charge" staff at a public library, she decided to allow a few drenched homeless patrons to place their coats on the heaters. This resulted in an odor that spread through the building and her decision resulted in patron complaints. Library school did not teach us how to best serve varying populations of patrons with balance and equity.

We frequently (and often unwillingly) have to navigate ambiguous situations involving service animals. Service animals provide essential services for many, but it's challenging for all when an animal that isn't well trained enters the library. Kelsey recollects telling a patron that they couldn't let their dog drink out of the water fountain, only to be told "but she's a service animal!" Conversely, talking to a patron with PTSD about the animal they bring into the library can be a delicate conversation that involves compassion and flexibility, as well as a full understanding of the revised code of Washington and the Washington State Human Rights Commission regarding service animals in our state.

Working at a public reference desk brings a new opportunity every day. We share skills with social workers, priests, bartenders, and IT support simultaneously. Having someone sit down beside you and start the conversation with, "I grew up in a cult," or request help scanning old newspaper articles about being held in slavery as a child, makes you stand in awe of the trust placed in you. Being asked for a photograph of Benjamin Franklin or an aerial photo of Pangea is the other side of that coin. An open mind, active listening skills, and a straight face are typically our best defenses.

Last but not least, we offer some basic fashion advice. There are a few basic rules we can all agree on:

1. Always dress with the expectation that you will be crawling around on the floor.
2. If you wear white to work, it is a guarantee the printer will explode on you.
3. Cardigans are not a stereotype or a fashion statement. They are a necessity, as the temperature in all library buildings vacillates wildly throughout the day.
4. Lastly, always remember CYAN: cover your ass now. This applies in more ways than one to the field of librarianship.

In conclusion, we return to what we said in the beginning- "Expect the unexpected." However, we urge you all to remember that everything, yes everything is a learning opportunity. When you have an unexpected and perhaps unappealing task land on your desk, think of what you can learn, how it might frame your career path or enhance your resume. Maybe, just maybe, it will give you a great story to tell when you write your own "The Things I Didn't Learn in Library School" story. 📖

## Proposed Syllabus for Library School 103: Realities of the Library World

### Overview

Welcome to Library School 103: Realities of the Library World. Prerequisites include Introduction to Library and Information Science (100), Foundations of Information Literacy (101), and Foundations of Reference and Information Resources (102). By now, you should be ready to experience the true realities of working in a library. Please do not find yourself discouraged by this course content. Your instructor is always available to have a conversation, either by email at [librariesgetreal@gmail.com](mailto:librariesgetreal@gmail.com), by phone at (123) 456-7890, or by stopping in for office hours on Sundays between 5 and 10 pm (if you work in a library already, you'll understand).

### Learning Objectives

Facing the realities of your new profession.

### Required Readings

1. *Taming a Dragon: The Basics of Bookmobiles* by Minnie Van Driver and Vera Bruptly
2. *Foundations of Customer Service* by Dot Snice, A. Kurt Nod and Begonia Payne-Diaz
3. *How to Dress Like a Professional-- and Still Be Able to Get Down!* by Natalie Attired and Susan Shocks
4. *Government Forms: Don't Worry, No One Understands Them* by Trudy Gauntlet and Hugh Don Wannano
5. *Keeping that Smile on Your Face* by Hugo Gurl and Nadia Gedit
6. *How to Address Any Emergency* by Ron Lykell
7. *Keeping a Handle on Your Work/Life Balance* by Kay Kaneetit
8. *How to Keep Your Building in Tip-Top Form* by Oscar Ruitt

### Course Schedule

#### Week 1

Biohazard training, first aid, mental health first aid, self-defense, and emergency procedures

#### Week 2

Building maintenance: toilet troubleshooting, "sorry my kid peed," and "how many library staff does it take to screw in a lightbulb in a pendulum lamp that's 25 feet up in the air?"

#### Week 3

Large vehicle operations

#### Week 4

Soft skills: navigating the murky waters of porn, how to gracefully exit a conversation while still providing good service, de-escalation techniques, and the essentials of "poker face"

#### Week 5

Administrative duties and technical assistance, or "is this really why I went to library school?" (hint: yes, it is)

#### Week 6

Collection management: also known as Library Jenga or Library Tetris

#### Week 7

Government forms and online applications: the how and why

#### Week 8

Fashion forward, how to dress for success and CYAN (cover your ass now!)

#### Week 9

Time management, including email strategies, meetings (why so many?), magic and time travel: essential skills for working under deadline while still making time for your patrons, colleagues, and staff

#### Week 10

Technology basics, including "why are we still using Internet Explorer?" and "have you tried turning it off and back on again?" Also included: "how to avoid widespread panic when your internet goes down" and "printing success for 2 minutes before closing."

### Course Requirements

The ability to embrace ambiguity, grace under pressure, a sense of humor and a stiff upper lip.

### Evaluation

Peer Review, to be done over drinks at your favorite watering hole

### Course Outcome

A job in the library of your dreams and the training you need to succeed.

# A Lot Like Calvinball: Library Work Is Never the Same Game Twice

by Alex Byrne

If I had to sum up what transitioning to a workplace from library school was like, I might say the following quote from *Men In Black* (1997) covers about ninety-five percent of it, with the new hire taking on the role of Agent J and the experienced staffer playing Agent K:

**J:** But before y'all go beaming me up there's one thing you gotta remember: You chose me... so you recognized the skills, so I don't want nobody calling me son or kid or sport or nothing like that, cool?

**K:** Cool, whatever you say, Slick, but I need to tell you something about all your skills. As of right now, they mean precisely... [nothing].

In library or information school, there is a course, or a section of a course, on how to give The Reference Interview. During the class, pristine practice questions and very helpful people are the norm. Outside of the class, it seems to be a truth of the library world that the first question or statement a real person gives when interacting with you is incomplete. The question itself may be grammatically correct, a complete sentence, and otherwise coherent, and it will still lack the information needed to fully understand and help the person asking or making a statement.

"Where are your children's books [because I'm trying to find The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe]?"

"I need a guest pass [so I can check all the job boards and see if there's been anything new, as well as deal with unemployment insurance bureaucracy]."

"Can you help me find a book [that I need for my class and don't want to have to spend an exorbitant amount of money on]?"

It's not usually that people are deliberately trying to hide things from us. A lot of the time, people don't tell us everything up front because they don't realize that's what we need to be effective. Some people are clearly intent on their thing, whether that's computer access or getting to a spot in the library, and are uninterested in any further conversation than what's necessary. Others, however, seem to respond well to a particular question I've learned to ask: "Is there something specific you are looking for?" Because a lot of people that ask you where your section on X, Y, or Zed is do have a more specific thing in mind when they ask, but they often figure they can find it themselves if they get into the general space of it. Not more than a few times have they (or myself) been wrong about where the general space is.

**“ Sometimes a grownup sees you as the Club of Knowledge, and the kid needs you to be the Sneakers of Truth. ”**

On sensitive subjects, we might not get the real question ever. People get hung up on asking us where they can find books about sex, relationships, self-harm, and other subjects that telling the wrong person about could have disastrous consequences. It's really hard to ask someone who you don't trust and recognize will be supportive about those things. As

much as librarians would like to be the kind of people you can trust and support, it requires a lot of rapport or witnessing a librarian prove themselves to be an ally before they can be trusted with those questions. The skills and the answers are there, but without the underlying trust, it's not going to happen.

Getting people to tell you what they want is sometimes an exercise in free association games:

"I want a good mystery."

"Okay, tell me about some of the mystery authors you like reading."

"Well, I like Alice."

"What do you like about Alice?"

"She writes Ex, Why, and Bet."

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Alex Byrne is a Youth Services Librarian with the Pierce County Library System

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"Have you read author Bethany? She does Why and Bet."

"Don't like her."

"What don't you like about her?"

And so on, gathering more information and detail with each iteration until we feel confident enough to go to the stacks and find an author or title that seems to work and is checked in, which usually triggers remembering a few other authors and asking about them, until the requester has a few books to try that are new and see if they like them. Wandering the materials is often one of the things that triggers place memory for both librarian and user, and it's always good to go check the shelves to see if your perfect recommendation is actually available - our catalog system doesn't know any better when things have been disappeared from the shelves one way or another.

Algorithms can do some of this work, at least in the idea of recommending more to you based on what you already like and have read before, and some in the matter of tag and keyword matching, if the tagging and categorization system is sufficiently robust and deep to make matches and linkages. Sometimes it takes a human touch to get someone acquainted with material they wouldn't otherwise be interested in at all. Sometimes you get a person who comes in very interested in sports stories, only wants sports stories, and then ends up leaving with a story about zombies invading an idyllic town, because the main characters go to town on the undead using their baseball bats. Sometimes you get successful by hitting the almost-random button, where after listening to the things that are liked and the reasons why your suggestions keep getting rejected, you tempt the reader with something that has a promising cover blurb, good art on the cover, and the guarantee that they don't have to lay out any money for it or read past the first few pages to decide whether or not to stick with it. Sometimes it's a complete bomb, but more often than not, there's enough of a spark to follow it through to completion.

Recommendations and reference questions are as much, if not more of, an art form than a formula or method to follow. Establishing a

shared terminology, getting to the actual question, and then finding promising leads are matters of finesse, trust, social engineering, mapping a search engine query to the human knowledge collected, and then interpreting the results back to the person to see whether you're on the right track. To the uninitiated, it looks like magic. To someone expecting the same kinds of interactions that they learned on in school, it can look like chaos, or worse, it can look like none of the skills being learned are actually being put to use and a person is getting right results by having worked in the same place for so many years that they've built up a specialized block of knowledge that nobody else can match.



*Detail from "Calvin Runs Through the Streets of London" by Alan Levine, licensed under CC by 2.0*

Truthfully, the work of the library is much more like a game of Calvinball – the only permanent rule is that you can't play it the same way twice. The skills learned in library school are still applicable, but the situations they're being applied to have very little resemblance to the practice questions in school. People don't know, or don't want to say, the entirety of their question, so you use what skills you have on the fragment you've got. Teens and children ask questions differently than adults, so sometimes you have to show that you understand each other first. Sometimes a grownup sees you as the Club of Knowledge, and the kid needs you to be the Sneakers of Truth. And every now and then, you realize you've wandered into an Opposite Zone and the best thing you can do is sing the "I'm Very Sorry" Song and hop off to Wicket Five, knowing that the next time, you'll be working under some other

set of circumstances. The skills still matter, but the circumstances they'll be put to use in are as varied as the people themselves. That's what nobody taught me, and I could have saved myself a lot of disappointment and worry by knowing this right from the beginning. 📖

# I Never Expected to Laugh So Much

by Kirsten Edwards

Nearly three decades ago, freshly sprung from library school, my best friend Lorraine Burdick and I went to our first WLA conference. I wasn't sure what to expect. As a long-time super nerd (I wrote my first dungeon crawl at the age of 15: a D&D version of *Dante's Inferno*), I'd been to loads of "cons". But I didn't know that librarians did "cons", too. I was pretty sure they wouldn't have art shows or hall costumes (If you're reading this and new to the librarian-and-information-science thing, word to the wise: they don't). But what about panels? Dealers' rooms? Connecting with other fen and SF professionals? Or filking? You know: the thing where everyone gets around and sings off-key science fiction versions of popular ditties? (Filking, for those of you looking for a frame of reference, is pretty much the pre-internet version of Minecraft parodies).

I soon discovered that while librarians don't cosplay (at least not at professional conventions) professional conventions are **a thing**. Exhibitors' rooms showcase all the neat tools and equipment. The panels are usually amazeballs. We always learn so much: from innovative senior outreach ideas, to the latest in geographic designators in MARC II records (nerd, remember?), to creative ways to incorporate music in storytime. WLA is also the bomb for making professional connections. But surprise, surprise, library conventions, if you know where to look, sometimes do offer opportunities to *filk*.

Late one night, after the big dinner had wrapped (above-average speaker, below-average chicken: the usual WLA fare), Lorraine and I were wandering the conference center, wondering what to do next. Most of the rooms were empty, but one was open, filling up with people carrying drinks. It was clearly set up for one of the panels, with a lectern and row seating, but there was kind of a party atmosphere. We checked our trusty con brochure (no pictures of anime cat girls in space suits, but still, very informative) and learned it was the "Annual Meeting of the Society Gaius Julius Solinus v.

Washingtonius". We would soon voice the words that she and I have heard so many, many, times in the ensuing years: What the heck is "Solinus"?

From the moment Jonathan Betzall called the meeting to order we were hooked:

**“ I know, I know: It's hard to imagine a world where there isn't a demand to re-enact problematic reference interviews with sock puppets. ”**

*I [state your name] do humbly, fervently, and solemnly swear, upon my oath as a member of the noble profession of librarianship to do the following:*

*1. To work assiduously to make light of my otherwise too serious and ponderous profession whenever I can.*

*2. Thus insulated against frumpiness in myself, I shall exercise every*

*opportunity to similarly infect the minds and hearts of my fellow professional librarians, including, but not necessarily limited to, those practicing their noble profession in the fair State of Washington.*

*3. That I shall endeavor to keep alive this sacred Society, founded as it was as a major step in accomplishing the other two tasks which I have just humbly, fervently, and solemnly sworn,*

*4. That I take this oath willingly, albeit with no small amount of profound embarrassment, but then, by participating in the Society, I have already shown the whole world that I don't mind performing like an absolute fool in public, so that's O.K.*

*So help me, [state personal deity or lack thereof here]*

Respectable members of the library field stood up and with a perfectly straight face presented "scholarly" critiques that unabashedly poked fun at our profession. And then they sang comic verse about it.

It wasn't long before Lorraine and I were writing our own presentations. We'd come up with a topic to send to the Chair, and then skip the dinner to hole up at the bar and write it up together. While I could come up with ideas at the drop of a hat (how to cosplay at library conventions, storytime music for librarians when

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Kirsten Edwards is Co-President of Society Gaius Julius Solinus v. Washingtonius and a teen librarian for the King County Library System.

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Comic by the author

your voice sounds like a coyote-in-a-duet-with-a-rusty hinge, outreach to the undead) she was the comic genius that made some of our best ideas laugh-out-loud funny. My favorite is still Librarians of Tomorrow, Today! -- an all cable public access show about improving your service model with psychic powers. She also came up with the idea (and had the vocal chops to pull it off) of setting the Library Bill of Rights to Gilbert & Sullivan show tunes (funny hats optional): H.M.S. Rights for All!

Those were the halcyon days of the Society Gaius Julius Solinus v. Washingtonius. (And I'm only saying that because they're the ones I happen to remember falling about laughing in.)

- *Ode to ROM* by Don Julian
- *McEducation* by Tony Wilson
- *Terrifying Children's Books* by Jonathan Betzall
- *True Life Reference: Tales from the Reference Desk* by Mike Woods
- *Songs from the Stacks* by the Poet Emeritus of the University of Oregon Library

- *Bibbity Bobbity Boo: An Excellence in Reference Services Technique*
- *Outsourcing Storytime to the Mafia* by Kirsten Iller
- And so many more.

But the world is changed (feel free to read this in a Galadriel voice). Back in the 1980s there were Solinus chapters in Maine, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North and South Dakota, Kansas, Arizona, Montana, Iowa, Rhode Island, Nevada, the Virgin Islands, and Alaska. We know this because the Maine Chapter came after us for not having gotten an official sanction and charter with Attached Seal (it's cute, white, and fuzzy). But that was then. Now, most of the old guard have retired. The young 'uns have [library memes](#), many of which are pointed, funny, and have adorable cats.

I know, I know: It's hard to imagine a world where there isn't a demand to re-enact problematic reference interviews with sock puppets. Librarians singing off-key about microfiche just aren't in as much demand when you can have YouTube stars like [Julian Smith](#) singing "Never interrupt me when I'm reading a book".



The official seal of Society Gaius Julius Solinus v. Washingtonius

WLA's chapter of the Society Gaius Julius v. Washingtonius appears to be the very last official librarian humor group in the U.S. And this coming October, we'll host the final meeting and close our chapter. I never expected that. So, if you've never come before: now's your "last chance to see". Lorraine and I will be bringing some of our favorite presentations from the Society's archives to share. And if you ever presented at Solinus, we'd love to hear you reprise one of your greatest hits (and if you don't have it, we probably do: please get in touch).

As ever, due to the prestigious nature of the event, requests to present **MUST** be delivered at **LEAST** five minutes prior. Unless you buy me a beer. 📖

# Booktender Confidential

by Lisa Cox

When I saw the topic for the summer issue -- “What nobody ever tells you about working in libraries? -- I knew this was a topic that I could write about. I worked behind the scenes for a few years before I was promoted to the Circulation Staff at Spokane Public Library. I was so excited to finally work with the public. At that time, we were very hands-on with assisting customers with their checkouts. We had to scan the barcodes, stamp the due dates and bag them up. During this time, we could really engage in conversations with our patrons.

I was always amazed by how much people would reveal about themselves during these conversations. I was included in the whole spectrum of emotions from happy to angry. I was included in family matters such as births, deaths and trials and tribulations. Work-related stories were also shared with me. If they were searching for a particular subject, I was informed as to why they were looking for that information. Sometimes, it felt like TMI (too much information) and sometimes TLI (too little information).

I would tell my family and friends that I felt like a bartender; instead of serving drinks I was serving library books. These conversations made me a fast learner on how to think on my feet and respond accordingly. There were a few surprises along the way.

One day I was helping an older gentleman with his items and he unexpectedly asked “Will you marry me?” I replied, “Not today,” and continued with my work. He laughed so hard at my response and continued the conversation by sharing a photo of his younger self in uniform. We talked about when and where he served.

I had someone who thought I should definitely know who he was. He stated his name approximately three times to me. Meanwhile, I’m thinking to myself, who is this guy? I certainly did not want to burst his bubble, but I literally had no idea who he was. I just kept on task and wished him a good day at the end. I learned later in the day that he was indeed related to someone important. He did not ask for anything special. He just wanted acknowledgment.

One time I started with, “Hello, how are you today?” I had this gentleman reply in a whispered voice, “Not very good I’m afraid.” I said, “Oh, I’m so sorry to hear that. I hope your day gets better.” Utter silence was his response. I was immediately concerned and looked up to find him staring at me with his mouth hanging open. I asked him “Is there anything wrong?” He responded that he says this phrase to everyone he deals with during the day, and that I was the first one in a very long time that responded correctly. He stated that most either ignored the comment, did not even acknowledge it or responded “That’s nice!” This was a huge lesson for me on how to be an active listener.

I loved it when someone would share their travel experiences and would file that information away for future plans. Some of these stories were hilarious. If you ever want to hear the story about the bear, the bicycle and the hikers, let me know. It is not my personal story, but one of many that was shared with me. It still makes me laugh every time I think about it.

Sometimes when people would apply for library cards, they would tell me where they were from and how the library was important to them when they were growing up. If they moved around a lot, the library was one of the first places they would go. Personally, I have only moved once in my life. I can only imagine what it would be like to move to a different city or state, and then try to get your bearings. It was nice to hear that visiting the local library was a top priority.

Even though Spokane Public has moved towards digital content and a self-service environment, the need to make a human connection with staff members is still relevant. It is less hands-on, but we still make an effort to connect with patrons. My coworkers and I feel like we have many roles to play: confidante, counselor, best friend, ally, wise one, technology guru, problem-solver, partner, teammate, teacher, student, searcher, rescuer, finder, and last but not least “book”tender. 📖

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*Lisa Cox is a Library Clerical Assistant with the Spokane Public Library.*

# Beyond Books: Your Library Is Here for You, No Matter What

by Emily Henson

To many when I say, “I work in a library,” they usually ask me “Wait, that’s a job?” or they say “What a great job! Must be quiet all the time. How lucky.”

But, they don’t see the reality of the library. The staff that clean up the bathrooms after someone has “showered” or missed the toilet, the vandalism where kids cut the wires to our headphones, the physical fights teens get into, the questions about marijuana recipes, the times we help patrons with activating their expensive new phone, and the handful of times staff have been hit on and made uncomfortable by strangers. That is library vulnerability. This is public service in its most raw and true form.

We have names for all our regular patrons. Half of them we don’t know their given name, so we’ve created a nickname for them. “Printer Guy,” “Mom with the Peeing Son” or “Recipe Lady,” -- it’s a wide range of patrons that are given names and it’s neither a good or bad thing to have. It just means we see you around a lot, and appreciate your company so much that the staff have decided to give you a forever name. Well, until we learn your *actual* name.

Of course, some of our regulars will turn into strangers and our strangers will turn into our regulars. We once had a woman who would come into the library for books every now and then. She’d ask us for help if the self-checkout wasn’t working, and that was the extent of our interaction. One night, twenty minutes before closing, she came rushing in. Her red hair was a stringy mess and she was juggling her phone, phone cables, and a box in her hands.

“I can’t get my new phone to work. It’s locked up on me,” she explained. Our clerk smiled, brought her over to our public computers and sat with her for the next twenty minutes doing all she could to help this woman out. The staff were asked to see if we had a similar phone and could assist. We used our own phones to call phone companies and the woman’s new phone to see if it could be activated. Twenty minutes went by, and the woman left with no success. She stuffed her belongings into her purse, pulled on her navy blue puffy jacket and smiled.

“Thanks, though. What time do you guys open tomorrow?”

“10am. Come in early, and we’ll see if we can get the phone to work.”

Sure enough, the next morning she was waiting outside with her cords, and phone hanging out of her purse. She spent the next three hours in our little library, working with staff and phone companies until the case was finally cracked. Her screen lit up, and she was finally able to start her phone. She grinned and left.

Now she comes in with all sorts of technical problems. Her tablet, her computer, her phone, her email, etc. She’s gotten the title; “Technical Difficulties Lady”.

If there is one true thing I’ve learned over the years of working at a library, it’s that our patrons are more than just patrons. Some of them we’ve watched grow from children to adults. We know their pets, their children, and now their grandchildren. They can depend on us when they need book suggestions, technology help, or just someone to listen. A lot of the time, we’re listening to their life story because we may be the only people they have in their lives. We are someone who will listen to them, engage in a conversation with them and look at them without a jump to judgement. We [library staff] are their friends, and a smiling face greeting them to a safe place. Those who work at the library, do it and stay with it because they love it and cherish those they serve.

When I got hired, nowhere in the job description did it say we’d be friends with our patrons or we’d pick up after our patrons. We’re customer service with a bonus. The library is more than a building filled with books, and the staff are more than just people who know how to scan books or answer phones. It’s not something you think about when turning in an application, and it’s something people outside of the library wouldn’t know. The bond that is created is as an unknown perk.

When we’re cleaning up after others, or dealing with vandalism I do wonder, “This is *really* my job? Why did it have to be this?” then I’m reminded when I see kids or teens with a pile of books, or an elder smiling because we make them happy. To me, that’s all people need to know about the library. Is that those who work in a library are here for you, no matter what you bring to us. 📖

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Emily Henson is a page at the Ferndale Public Library.

# This Director Does It All!

by *Dusty Waltner*

I have spent all of my adult life working in libraries and thought I had a deep understanding of all aspects of library work from cataloging to reference, programming to IT support. When I was hired as the Library Director for a small, rural library I was shocked and overwhelmed by the things I didn't know.

I started volunteering in libraries in my teen years and was hired as a library assistant at age eighteen. Through the years I worked in both academic and public libraries, but always found myself going back to public work. The public libraries, while technically considered rural, were all multi-branch systems. I understood the hierarchy, the chain of command: there were assistants, department supervisors, and branch managers. Only the supervisors and managers reported directly to the Director. Small, rural libraries are nothing like this. I am the Director of a single-branch library, the only library in a county of 4,000 people and when I started we had three part-time employees, including the custodian.

As the Director of a small, rural library I do the collection development, the cataloging, all of the network support, all of the HR, all of the accounting and payroll, and all of the marketing and advertising, in addition to a good portion of the shelving, circulation, and reference work. Time to plan and order for SRP? The Director has that covered. Time to build robots with children afterschool? The Director will lead that program. I do the job of many, and often work 60 hours per week to get it done. We are open 41 hours per week, and many of the administrative tasks have to be set aside until there are no patrons that need help. Twelve-hour days are fairly common. While it can get overwhelming at times, I am also extremely grateful for the opportunity. I am never bored; every day brings something different.

Often forgotten about small, rural librarians is that they are never off of work. You go to the bank and leave with a stack of books to be returned. You go to the grocery store and leave with an Interlibrary

Loan request list. There is never a moment in which I am off duty. This may sound dreadful to some, and there are definitely moments in which I would relish some anonymity, but there is something to be said for everyone knowing the librarian. I walk into the local lumber store and they announce "the librarian is here" as if I am a local celebrity, and in many ways I am. I am that person that every kid in town knows. They know that they can talk to me, ask me for help, or a ride home. I am the person that many people think of when they need a volunteer, or someone to spearhead a local fundraiser. Being a director of a small, rural library means that the library is at the center of the community. Just about everything that happens in our community is

usually linked to the library in some way, and that keeps us relevant and effective in our mission.

In my short three years as a small, rural library director, I have doubled the employees and the functioning square footage of our library. We created an entire youth library in the basement level and have been able to offer three times the programming of previous years, all while wearing many hats. The most rewarding part of my job is being a role model for our employees. Our library assistants do it all. There are no specialists here – they learn cataloging, offer reader's advisory, participate in website development, and create amazing programs like the best of them, all while providing incredible customer service every single day. Just recently we held a Mardi Gras Party with over 80 attendees, and to kick-off our Summer Reading Program we hosted a Carnival Style Block Party with everything from a local stage and performers to carnival style games and food. We had over 300 attendees and 15 volunteers. This is the life of a small, rural library community, and we wouldn't have it any other way. 📖

**“As the Director of a small, rural library I do the collection development, the cataloging, all of the network support, all of the HR, all of the accounting and payroll, and all of the marketing and advertising, in addition to a good portion of the shelving, circulation, and reference work.”**

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*Dusty Waltner is the Director of the Columbia County Rural Library District*

# Range of Motion: Staff Transitions in Technical Services

by Whitney Buccicone and Morag Stewart

“Do you really need a library degree for that?” Many of us have heard this query, or a version of it, at some point in our careers but, in how many instances was that true? To library users and those who work outside of technical services, acquiring, cataloging, and processing library materials may seem like an unknown country hidden behind a magic curtain. These tasks and responsibilities that take place seemingly just out of sight are performed by a host of highly trained paraprofessional and professional staff every day. The differences in roles between paraprofessionals and professional librarians vary from one library to another, and between types of institutions, ever-changing in response to technology and other pressures on library work. The authors were once two paraprofessionals who made the transition to professional librarian rank. We now want to share our experiences from that transition as well as highlight the importance of these different roles and how others might navigate such transitions.

Depending on the library, non-librarian staff may variously be referred to as paraprofessional, classified, or support staff and what they do in comparison to someone with a librarian job title varies as well. We have chosen to use paraprofessional throughout for consistency. The authors’ experiences come from the academic environment, but hopefully our comments will prove applicable to other library settings as well.

## Blurring lines: who does what in technical services?

Much of the literature about differences between librarians and paraprofessionals, whether in technical services or other areas of library service, highlights educational differences, but also notes the growing confusion over the distinction between position responsibilities. In their study, James, Shamchuk, and Koch found that:

*“Confusion of roles, a blurring of the line between librarians and library technicians, and fluidity of tasks are nothing new to the library field. What may be a new phenomenon is the perception that the role of the paraprofessional is increasing in scope and intellectual caliber... library school curricula at the master’s and diploma level as well as workplace training should reflect role and competency changes so as to best prepare both*

*librarians and library technicians for the transitioning nature of the workplace”<sup>1</sup>*

Likewise, many discussions of early career librarians and advice for those new to their roles focus on those recently graduated from master’s programs and with little library work experience. What is lacking is the perspective of those who have made the transition from paraprofessional to librarian, thus coming to the profession with a certain amount of library experience, and who may hold a master’s degree for a period of time before attaining a librarian position.

## What they didn’t tell you in library school

When applying to and starting a library or information science master’s degree program, few aspiring librarians likely say they hope to go on to be paraprofessionals. Upon graduation, one’s focus is on getting that first professional job, possibly making better pay than the last staff position held, promotion opportunities, and the like. What, from our experience, is not frequently discussed are the many reasons holders of a Master’s in Library Science (and similar degrees) may take paraprofessional positions. These may include gaining experience in a different type of library or department than held previously. Many need a job after graduate school and taking a paraprofessional position builds work experience. There is also the promise for some that these positions allow for more job flexibility while not taking on the pressures of being a librarian.

One place where differentiation between professional and paraprofessional is most clear is in job descriptions. Most professional jobs will have one of the following in the title: Librarian, Director, Head, etc. Paraprofessional positions will frequently have: Technician, Cataloger, Processor, Specialist, etc. Though not consistent across all types of libraries, many academic paraprofessional job descriptions will also include a statement that the position is represented by a union or governed by a contract. Duties typical of librarian positions include oversight or management of people and/or collections, project management, policy development and other big picture responsibilities. In contrast, paraprofessional position descriptions often include specifics regarding types of software used on the job, references to volume of work to be performed, and descriptions of regularly performed tasks and processes.

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Whitney Buccicone is a Special Collections Cataloging Librarian, University of Washington Libraries. Morag Stewart is an Acquisitions and Classics Librarian, University of Washington Libraries.

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Many librarian positions require some form of management, whether it is of volunteers, interns, part-time or full-time staff. From our experience, management and negotiation skills were not offered in a meaningful way in library school, but are very much in demand on the job as a librarian. Whether one is a supervisor of staff or not, management skills are a must in setting one's own schedule, leading committees and managing projects effectively. Likewise, negotiation is important for everything from setting your salary upon hire to getting along well with your boss and colleagues. It's not necessarily a formal negotiation such as one may have with a vendor regarding a new product license, but it's a specific subset of communication skills that enable effective interactions.

As an academic librarian, there is some expectation that you set your own schedule, including research and professional development time. You may be responsible to your supervisor for certain regular tasks, but no one else is responsible for keeping you on track professionally. One may also find much of one's typical work day spent attending meetings. Instead of being concerned with day to day minutia of the number of orders filled, items cataloged, pieces barcoded, or electronic links fixed during a troubleshooting call as a paraprofessional, a technical services librarian may focus more on assessing overall workflows, vendor relations, and the big picture impacts of changing technology. As a librarian, you may be called on to balance strategic plans of both the institution and your own department.

### **Professional development**

What is the career change from paraprofessional to librarian really like, what changes in skills, attitude, and expectations are required to be successful in this transition? One of the biggest differences we've encountered between being a paraprofessional and professional is the professional development and status expectations within the institution. As a librarian, an important part of your position will be keeping abreast of the changes in your specific field. You can do this in multiple ways through trainings, conferences, and networking.

Professional development is a critical aspect of being a pre-tenure technical services librarian at an academic institution. Whether you work in an academic institution with tenure status for librarians or not is a big consideration as far as expectations for professional development, continuing education, and service to the profession overall. One method that may help ease the transition is to sit down with your immediate supervisor and create a professional development plan with a timeline. This will list expectations of both yourself and your supervisor and how the plan will fit your institution's tenure requirements. This will also give you something to refer to when creating your promotion documentation.

There are multiple continuing education and networking

opportunities available online as well through professional organizations. Joining professional organizations can be expensive, but a worthwhile opportunity that brings key networking opportunities. However, one often gets out what one puts in -- volunteering and putting your foot forward to be involved in an organization that interests you will likely take you further and provide deeper engagement professionally than an organization you join for the name only. The basic membership fee for the American Library Association is \$50 for support staff and \$140 for professional staff, though there are also differing payment levels for those in the first years of their careers or in transition.<sup>2</sup> With subdivisions (such as the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services) having their own fees, it can add up to over \$200 per year.

Attending conferences provides invaluable networking opportunities and opportunities to get to know more about your field and those who are in it. Knowing your institution's travel guidelines and request process is a must in order to plan and manage your travel budget, if you have one. Conference registration costs vary, but hotel and airfare easily double or triple the cost. The authors' institution (The University of Washington) allocates money for staff and professional travel each biennium, but that may not cover all expenses, especially if one wants to attend more than one conference a year. Some institutions offer the use of an institutional travel credit card, but it may still be under the individual staff person's name, thus making them responsible for payment of the bill before being reimbursed. Some costs may be reimbursed before a conference, but again, you may end up picking up the costs weeks or months before reimbursement. Planning ahead as to how many events to attend, what opportunities each offers, and how you might travel to get there will make stretching travel funds easier and help keep your professional development plan on track.

Low cost ways to network and receive training are through listservs and web archives of previous webinars, articles, and more. The Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) has a thorough listing of all of its archived webinars that cover topics from acquisition to cataloging.<sup>3</sup> They also have active listservs listed on their website.<sup>4</sup>

### **Challenges and opportunities**

Accepting a professional position after holding a paraprofessional job for a period of time is no small decision. Making the transition is not easy and comes with sacrifices, whether that is in terms of schedule changes, increased professional obligations, or other unforeseen challenges. Depending on the institution and position, there is a sense that compared to one's relatively new librarian role, one's previous paraprofessional experience is devalued. Whether you are changing institutions as well as positions, or making a

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local transition within the same library can also influence one's experiences.

There are advantages and disadvantages to making the professional move at the institution where one previously worked as a paraprofessional. Right at the top of both lists is familiarity --with people, with organizational structure, and policies and procedures. Familiarity may lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. For instance, some colleagues may not be aware of your change in position or status, or otherwise forget to include you in conversations that as a librarian fall within your scope of work, but which were outside your boundaries as a paraprofessional staff member.

Already knowing people within an organization makes taking on a new position easier in that you have some idea who to go to for help. However, the imposter syndrome may feel particularly strong with an internalized sense that you should already know what to do since you worked in the same library, albeit in a different capacity, previous to becoming a librarian. Acknowledging the advantages, but also reminding others that you still have a lot to learn can help in adjusting to these changes.

### Looking toward the future

While it is anecdotal to say the number of technical services librarians (and technical services staff in general) is shrinking, there are also ways that the field is growing and shifting as libraries and librarianship change. Depending on the institution, there are new opportunities in technical services to manage data and new electronic formats instead of physical books. Those more comfortable with math and numbers may find work with assessment and collection development in re-envisioned acquisitions and collections units. Cataloging has made way for metadata and a host of potential services to support growing digital humanities and digital scholarship endeavors.

A theme that has emerged in recent literature is the idea of the de-professionalization of the technical services librarian. What once were professional or librarian rank positions have been reimagined as paraprofessional positions, usually occurring after retirements or other vacancies. As discussed previously, librarians frequently have management duties and those managerial tasks are what are frequently taken away to reclassify positions as paraprofessional. The benefit of this is more staff dedicated to day-to-day operations which increases productivity. The negative is fewer librarians contributing to professional development of our field since the stereotype is that only professionals attend conferences, teach, or publish. Another negative is that, as a librarian, more of your time is spent managing, instead of completing daily duties. For some, this is a welcome change. For others, it can be a large drawback and the job you signed on to do is completely changed.

In the midst of this, librarians may be called on to do less day-to-day work such as cataloging or filling of orders, while paraprofessionals do more. These paraprofessional positions may require greater technological skill than called for in the past and the complexities of the work need to be recognized. Managers and those seeking to be new technical services librarians need to keep open minds as to these changes in the types of work performed in technical services and the training and skills needed to do such work. When someone in a paraprofessional position becomes a librarian, both the individual making the transition and their manager need to understand their changing roles. In doing so, technical services librarians are ensuring the continuation of our field and its evolution going forward. 📖

### NOTES

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# Newton's Third Law: Working in Public Libraries Can Be Bittersweet

by Suzanne Carlson-Prandini

Grief. No one told me that I'd have to manage grief in working at a public library. I don't mean hassle, I mean heartbreak. Almost everyone talked about the rewards, so I should have recalled Newton's Third Law: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

With great joy comes great sorrow. Providing service in a public library requires staff members to build relationships with patrons. Just try to provide reader's advisory to a patron over time without bonding; it can't be done. What people read reveals tender parts of their personalities. It's a great privilege to be invited into someone's inner world through books and it fosters connection. But the inevitable passage of time that strengthens those relationship also brings unavoidable endings.

For example, I never anticipated that I would one day sit by the bedside of one of my long-term book club members, helping her eat ice cream in her final weeks. I would later sit with her daughter and son-in-law at her memorial, laughing and crying, as we recalled her spirited response of "Ice cream!" to my question of, "What's your favorite flavor?". That was Marge in a nutshell, content with the goodness in life whatever flavor it came in.

So, in honor of the patrons we've known and lost and the good work of the library staff members who connected with them, I'd like to tip my hat to those who work in Outreach Services. These folks often serve patrons closer to life's exit than entrance. To learn more, I interviewed Colleen Morse, the Outreach Specialist at the Bellingham Public Library:

S: How long have you worked in Outreach, Colleen?

C: Over 38 years. 41 Altogether in this library.

S: What surprises did this job hold for you?

C: The emotional drain when patrons pass away. Because you see them every month for years, some of them for many years, and they become like family. Even though it's a brief time with them each time...it's still difficult. So when I'm preparing for a visit I'm thinking, "this could be the very last time I see this person", you never know. I try to do the absolute best for them every time. After

they pass away you come across these books as you're selecting and you think, "So and so would have loved that book." You would think that over time you would get used to it, but it's still really hard. You've been giving them books, making them happy...and that's the nice thing about the job."

S: How do you take care of yourself?

C: Well, it's just accepting that this is going to happen. They're usually in facilities because they're ill, but now it's starting to be much younger people, younger than I am, and that's harder... you just have to know that you did what you could for them in providing service. If you do that, you're good.

S: Tell me about a favorite moment you've had with a patron.

C: I'm not sure about a favorite moment, because there have been lots of times over the years. I had a woman in an assisted living facility who was in her 90's and confined to her chair. She couldn't really go to activities and she couldn't hear that well and she would read about 25 books a month, regular print, she had great eyes, nonfiction, biographies. So selecting them every month was a challenge for that many books, but I did because she read that many. I didn't believe at first that she was going through all those books until I talked to her table mates. They would tell me, "oh, she was telling us all about all those books" and I knew that she was reading every one of [them]. She was so interested in learning; learning about countries and people and everything. That was so much fun to do that and I don't have anyone like that right now.

S: Is there something you wish more people knew about the work you do?

C: Just that you always have to be thinking ahead in selecting materials. You have to keep it in your mind as you're going around and think about what people want, planning ahead because you have to get those set aside early or requested. You have to always think about what they like, what they don't like...it's something you think about all the time.

S: What words of wisdom do you have for people who are just starting to work with patrons who require Outreach Services?

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*Suzanne Carlson-Prandini is a public services librarian for the Bellingham Public Library and a librarian with the Whatcom Community College Library.*

*continued on page 26*

# Supervisor or Aunt?: Blurring the Lines Between Management and "Other Duties As Assigned"

by Miriam Wnuk

When the topic of this issue was announced, “things you didn’t learn in library school,” I thought I had nothing special to add. See, I’m a library technician in a small academic library. Like many in the Greater Seattle area I have an MLIS, but I rarely get to use many of the skills I learned: such as performing reference interviews, teaching Boolean operators, or have the mythic reader’s advisory conversation. My responsibilities as the sole Library Technician on staff includes interlibrary loan, managing all things “physical” (including copy cataloging), and the supervision of three talented student library assistants. It is these students that are my focus for “what I didn’t learn in library school.”

Let me start by saying, I learned a lot during my MLIS but the one skill I didn’t explicitly learn was leadership, specifically the management of people. Sure, I had group assignments but I usually wasn’t the leader. I was responsible for my part or for pulling everything together and then asking everyone to approve the final product. Outside of school, my positions have always been towards the bottom of the food chain. Nobody ever reported to me.

This leads me to February of 2017 when City University of Seattle had an opening for a Library Technician II, who was responsible for interlibrary loan (ILL) and the supervision of three student employees. While I knew ILL like the back of my hand from a previous job, management scared me. However, when I interviewed they were worried about an MLIS holder taking a technician position

because, don’t we all want to be librarians? In my case, I just wanted to grow in my career and I saw being a supervisor a leap into the unknown. Wow, what a leap!

On my first day, I already knew my way around the ILL system (ILLiad) and the ILS (Koha) due to my previous library. Since the school was between quarters, I was introduced to the staff that was around and met the one library assistant working that day (who was also graduating that week). Yep, you got it. During my first week on the job, I was already looking at resumes and discussing with my supervisor who we should invite for interviews during my second week. It was weird trying to look at resumes and cover letters for students, when I barely knew what their workday was like. There is nothing like being in an interview and having them ask you what they do and me turning to my supervisor and asking them to answer. I felt like I was drowning. This was all in April 2017 and since then, I’ve done plenty of things I didn’t learn in library school.

First, I learned not to always listen to what a job announcement states. In my first hire, the one in which I barely knew what I was doing, it stated that graduate students were preferred. Since I didn’t know this, I interviewed an older undergraduate with IT experience. If I had followed the job posting, I may not have hired the amazing person that I did. In my second hire, I was shorthanded and not entirely sure what I was looking for, but I went with my gut. I ended up with an amazing person with an artistic



*City University of Seattle student library assistants (from left to right): Arrien Hoogendoorn, Maheesa Maheen, Linh Dieu Hoang*

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*Miriam Wnuk is a Library Technician II at the City University of Seattle Library & Learning Resource Center.*

# Public Policy, Advocacy and YOU!: What You Never Knew

by *Samantha Hines*

When I first saw the recruitment notice for the American Library Association's new Policy Corps in my email, I deleted it. A few days later, I found myself digging up the link on the ALA website.

I always wanted to be a wonk. In fact, I started out my BA program at Linfield College about a zillion years ago determined to become a political speechwriter, translating policy into inspiring prose. When I left with a BA *cum laude* in Political Science I was already employed at Project Vote Smart as my first entry into political life. Then I discovered what it was like to work with politicians and that dream very quickly died, but my love of providing information and helping others understand and work with it lived on as I went into librarianship. Policy Corps seemed like an interesting opportunity to reconnect with that desire to inspire people around policy, and I was pleased to be selected after submitting my application and a recorded two-minute video testimony on Net Neutrality.

ALA Policy Corps has provided me with two in-person trainings in Washington, D.C.: the first centering around understanding the federal policy process and the second on presenting ideas well. It's been a great refresher of things I learned in that long-ago bachelors' program, and an excellent reminder that the people who work on policy and in the media are in fact human. In entering this world I'm pleasantly surprised that I'm not setting myself up to get snarked on by smooth-talking wonks walking quickly like something out of the West Wing. Most of what we're working on in the program is developing confidence in our ability to build relationships with those working in policy creation and dissemination by understanding how their jobs work and how we can help them do their jobs well. Relationship-building is customer relations in a way, where we build

the relationship between our needs or goals and the elected official, or their staff, or the media. It's not too different from what we do within our communities with our users.

**“As a stereotypical introverted librarian, I would prefer to stay in my cozy book-lined office, but times have changed. The value of libraries must be proven, demonstrated, quantified and qualified in these difficult economic and political times; within our campuses or larger communities, in our state, and across the nation.”**

During National Library Legislative Day this past May, I got to put these trainings to the test by talking with legislators and staffers about several policy issues, including IMLS and LSTA funding vital to our profession: providing access to grants for projects, trainings and infrastructure across librarianship and not tied to a particular library or locale. While I was lucky enough to be there with a great contingent from our state, I had to take the lead in the meeting with my personal representative's staff — yikes! Thanks to Policy Corps and the modeling the other members of the Washington contingent did for me at our first meetings of the day, I think I did just fine. I followed up with that staffer once I returned to

my library, along with others I met, and have several valuable new contacts.

Moving on from this grounding, ALA wants those of us in the Policy Corps to select policy areas on which to focus, with the end goal of developing policy experts within our profession around the United States. They'll call on these experts to work with the media, testify before policymakers, and help develop local advocacy efforts, among other tasks. These policy areas have a federal focus: IMLS and LSTA appropriations and authorizations, Net Neutrality, and the like. However, as the saying goes: "all politics is local." We've seen a lot of action within Washington State, for example, around Net Neutrality. The local, state, and national efforts inform and support one another, and Policy Corps is working to develop active engagement and advocacy on all three levels. As a stereotypical introverted librarian, I would prefer to stay in my cozy book-lined office, but times have changed. The value of libraries must be proven, demonstrated, quantified and qualified in these difficult economic

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*Samantha Hines is Associate Dean for Instructional Resources and Library Director at Peninsula College, Port Angeles, WA.*

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and political times; within our campuses or larger communities, in our state, and across the nation.

For years, the method by which library advocates have demonstrated their value was through storytelling to illustrate data and trends, like with the gathering of stories to be presented to legislators or other elected officials. We've probably all participated in Library Snapshot Day or something similar to gather anecdotes for those participating in Library Legislative Day either in our state or in Washington, D.C. Attendees build relationships with our elected officials and their staff, we leave one-pagers describing how library cards, services, resources and programs changed individuals' lives, we invite them to visit our libraries when they're in town. We share these stories back home through letter writing campaigns to the local paper, or appearances in local media. We seem to have done a good job with these stakeholders, since it's hard to find a politician who doesn't say "I love libraries!" when you step into his or her office or get a response to a letter. Specific asks may be more of a challenge, but at least we can have a friendly meeting. This narrative work has been vital to preserving that IMLS and LSTA funding I was talking about this past Library Legislative Day and provides our profession a valuable foundation to build upon.

However, the recent OCLC Research report, *From Awareness to Funding: Voter Perceptions and Support of Public Libraries in 2018* shows how local advocacy efforts around libraries themselves need to be reconsidered. According to the study, 59% of voters think the bulk of public library funding comes from somewhere besides local taxes, while in reality 85% of library funding is local.<sup>1</sup> Alongside this misconception comes some precipitous drops in public perception of libraries from the previous OCLC study done ten years before. Only 51% of voters felt that "the library is an excellent resource for kids to get help with their homework" — a drop of 20%.<sup>2</sup> Only 53% of voters felt that "having an excellent public library is a source of pride" — another drop of 20%.<sup>3</sup> Along with these drops in perception came a 16% drop in committed voter support for library funding issues.<sup>4</sup> While our focus on lawmakers has been worthwhile and effective, it seems we have a deep need to advocate better, and differently, within our community to improve our image with our primary funders, the voting public.

Before those of us in academia think this doesn't affect us, remember that our user base's perceptions can and do reflect the perceptions of voters. If voters don't see the value of their community library, will students? Will administrators? Will the board of trustees? Our funding may not be voter-dependent, but it certainly depends on campus perception. Just ask our colleagues in school libraries how community perception affects them, even though they aren't directly supported by voters. None of us want to have to do this, I know. But we must.

Several people have spoken recently to the need for change in how

libraries and librarianship advocate, from John Chrastka<sup>5</sup> and Patrick Sweeney of EveryLibrary, to an editorial in *Library Journal*,<sup>6</sup> to a WebJunction webinar,<sup>7</sup> to those practicing in libraries<sup>8</sup>. More will have likely spoken out by the time this piece is published. Rationales have been floated from the advent of the smartphone to the downgrading of school librarians, but the main focus has been that, whatever the reason for the drop in public perception and voter support of libraries, there is a definite call for action now around how we advocate locally.

The first idea for change that has floated to the surface is to improve public awareness of libraries and what they do. This is not a new idea, and many libraries have been working on marketing to improve awareness of services and resources for years. ALA has done a great job with the "Libraries Transform" campaign and other efforts to boost the national profile of libraries. However, with this new study the urgency and importance of these efforts is highlighted. In addition, what passes for marketing among individual libraries is often better called 'advertising,' says P.C. Sweeney, and true marketing needs to "[encompass] a more holistic approach to getting the word out and measuring real results against goals."<sup>9</sup> Policy Corps is aware of this need to better market libraries and is developing that capacity within individual participants as well as for ALA and other associations, but there does need to be a broader and deeper conversation on what marketing truly means for our particular libraries and for our profession in order to effectively build awareness around what libraries actually do in a community.

The second concept for change is to hook into what's called 'super supporters' among our populations to advocate on our behalf. These are the folks who embody the value of libraries in their lives and communities; the ones whose stories we often carry to our legislators when we visit the Hill. But, again, we need to go beyond this storytelling to empower our super supporters to act for us. We need to stop assuming that advocacy is solely the job of the library director. Sweeney gives an excellent example of leveraging existing super supporters of EveryLibrary to take tangible action after Trump's first announcement of the cuts to IMLS, through donations and contacting representatives.<sup>10</sup> Other causes have already capitalized on this: Sweeney points out as an example how the NRA has mobilized a core group of committed members to causes that most Americans don't necessarily agree with, but have seen policy support despite the numbers. Policy Corps definitely is aware of this tactic and we've worked hard on relationship and network building in our face to face and online trainings, but this is a core tactic shift that needs to be adopted more broadly in the profession.

The library still plays a vital role in our communities, and the OCLC study demonstrates this. There was a 10% gain in perception around community hub issues: 48% of voters felt that libraries offer activities and entertainment you can't find anywhere else compared to 38% in 2008; 45% felt that the library was a place for people to gather

and socialize versus 36%; and 47% see the library as supporting civic discourse and community building, a new category in the study. Helping build job skills and providing services for immigrants also had a 10% bump in perception among voters. We all know the great work we're doing, and we all know about how it impacts and supports our communities. We know that libraries are more than just reading rooms that have been replaced by ubiquitous smart phones. We have a great opportunity with this new study to shape discourse around libraries, and change our approach to advocacy to a more inclusive, intrinsic, holistic one that builds awareness and support around what we do and who we are. We can connect libraries back to democracy and the community, and must connect our individual libraries' needs and functions with local, state and regional advocacy for the entire profession. We'll never be lucky enough to completely and forever 'win' the battle for library funding and support (whether we're talking about IMLS funding or voter support of levies), and we need to develop a constant and consistent focus on advocacy in some new ways. It's an exciting time to be involved in an initiative like Policy Corps, and I'm glad to get this chance to work on relating policy to citizens and back again in my profession. 📖

## NOTES

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5 John Chrastka, "Reversing the slide in voter support" | Backtalk. Library Journal, retrieved May 18, 2018, <https://lj.libraryjournal.com/2018/05/opinion/backtalk/reversing-slide-voter-support-backtalk/>.

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9-10 P.C. Sweeney, "The data is clear, it's time to move beyond storytelling for library advocacy", PC Sweeney, retrieved April 18, 2018 from <https://pcsweeney.com/2018/04/18/the-data-is-clear-its-time-to-move-beyond-storytelling-for-library-advocacy/>

eye. Now the library is getting seasonal decorations and fantastic customer service. Why to go marketing courses!

Second, I listen to my students. I check-in and see how their life outside of work is going and if their classes are going well. I ask for their feedback while making their quarterly schedules; just to make sure I haven't forgotten a volunteer project or special event. This is a case of, "do the opposite of how I was treated." In my last job, I felt like I was a cog and it took me breaking down and crying to let my supervisor know that my life wasn't going great. I may not have had a clue how to be a supervisor when I started, but I did know that I didn't want to be a dictator.

The final thing I did not learn about being a student employee supervisor in library school is how important it is to be their cheerleader! In my short time in this role, I have had several graduate, one get married, one pass a national business certification exam, and another make it to the final round of the National ENACTUS team competition. I have helped almost all of them with resumes and cover letters for new opportunities.

The most unique thing that I've done as their cheerleader, that I didn't learn in library school, is act as a fashion consultant for the ENACTUS team. This was a role that I never thought I would fill until early May 2018 when I found myself on my knees holding up a hem trying to decide how long a dress should be and then figuring out how to turn a belt into a bow. I am not a fashionista, and I don't know how to sew, but somehow, I fell into this role.

It was in this moment when I realized I wasn't a traditional "boss." I'm my own brand of "Xennial" leading a group of "Millennials" into a workplace that treats staff like family. My library assistants are my children, I'm their aunt (or at least I think I am), my librarians are my aunts and uncles, and our director is our mother. I only hope that future workplaces acknowledge that my library assistants are people worthy of notice. Not just cogs in a wheel, with no thoughts of their own.

In closing, while many people dread the "other duties as assigned" section in most job announcements, I recommend embracing it. When you are a supervisor, it means a lot more than the "gross" stuff. It also means you can celebrate the awesome stuff. 📖

# Juggling Act: Doing More With Less at Chastek Library

by Sharalyn Williams

In graduate school, conversation flourished around job titles, academic vs. public vs. special libraries, reference or instruction, and common librarian tropes and stereotypes. Many a conversation was had regarding reader's advisory, cataloging, and public services; however, the one thing missing from these generally lighthearted exchanges was the acknowledgement of massive funding cuts across the entire spectrum of public, academic, and special libraries. Not only acknowledging the awareness that libraries are a constant target, but that funding cuts severely impact not only acquisitions, programs, and technical services, they also affect the job duties of every librarian and staff member within the organization.

Chastek Library, a special law library at Gonzaga University School of Law, recently underwent budget cuts across the board which required the remaining librarians and staff to juggle new and expanding tasks. Housed on the Gonzaga University campus, the law school has a student body of around 330 postgraduates, over 20 full-time faculty, and almost 30 adjunct faculty members. The library is open roughly 90 hours a week, traffic count in 2018 has averaged just over 14,000 a month, and because we are a federal depository library, we maintain general public access throughout the year. While the budget cuts could have severely impacted the services offered, Chastek has upheld an active role in classrooms and on campus in order to remain visible, relevant, and valued. Many of the tasks the librarians and support staff have absorbed had been spread out over several employees but a loss in staff numbers required action so more had to be juggled by the few.

As the newly hired Public Services Librarian and Circulation Supervisor, I cannot stress enough how unaware I was regarding the sometimes overwhelming duties special librarians must juggle and manage due to budget cuts. Since I have become a librarian at Chastek Library, tasks have been spread out more evenly, lessening the everyday stress that the other librarians had been under; but there is still quite a bit on my docket that I was unaware that I would be actively managing as a newer professional.

## **Juggling an already full workload.**

Chastek Library currently works with a small team of four librarians and three full-time staff members; before hiring me, the

public services department had focused mainly on instruction, circulation, and reference desk management. However, as a library we wish to support our students and faculty and have an active and positive presence on campus. To do that, I have taken on an event and program planning role, bringing therapy dogs to campus during finals and creating a Library Trivia Night co-sponsored with our school's Center for Professional Development. We want the library to be a refuge of the studious but we also want to adapt it into a friendly and welcoming law community space where future and current professionals can gather and mingle in a casual and encouraging environment during school sponsored events.

While event planning is something I enjoy immensely, the amount of planning, time, and program management that goes into each event was quite unexpected. Furthermore, planning both small- and large-scale school events while actively supervising fifteen to twenty federal work study students can be quite overwhelming. I am responsible for the running of the circulation desk and am the front-line support for the young people that Chastek employs - a role that I take very seriously. Creating or updating policies and procedures, crafting student schedules, managing timesheets, handling complaints and concerns, and general supervisory work takes up a large portion of my time, and what is remaining is, unsurprisingly, filled with other duties including library event creation and management.

## **Information technology and coding.**

Limited staffing has led some of the librarians to take on more technology-based roles within the organization. In my case, I count my blessings every day that I took Information Technology during my graduate school days as I am now the Primo and BePress administrator in my library. I have had to use my limited past knowledge of CSS and HTML to update and install our new Primo UI and will take an active role in configuring our Primo VE once deployed by our consortium. I never knew how pivotal my required graduate courses would be in preparing me for my future career. As a student I was in the archives concentration bent towards working in special collections, but preservation does little to help a law librarian maneuver around HTML coding. This role was perhaps the most surprising that I have had to adapt to since beginning work at Chastek; it has been frustrating and enlightening, but I am more confident than ever in my ability to assist my library in transitioning to bigger and better technologies in the future. Perhaps later, if

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*Sharalyn Williams is a Public Services Librarian and Circulation Supervisor at the Chastek Library, Gonzaga University School of Law.*

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or when budgets permit, a more specialized technology librarian will be looked at to further lessen the workload; but given the propensity for libraries across the board to be constantly targeted this is uncertain.

### **Networking, instruction and reference.**

Instruction and reference are mainstays in many academic libraries; a library can be made or broken through their inability to connect with on-campus faculty and administration. This is where our library could have failed when the budget cuts went into effect, resulting in less staff in public services, but they did not. While instruction has not yet been a role I have had to play in my institution, we are lucky at Chastek because not only does our Library Director, Pat Charles, lead individual instructional course sessions throughout the semester, he is an Associate Professor of Law who teaches several full classes over the academic year, and has a strong campus presence through multiple on-campus committees. He is an active voice and recognizable face of the library to faculty, staff, and administration. Furthermore, our Head of Public Services Librarian, Ashley Sundin, is currently crafting a credited legal technology course for our students, teaching online continuing legal education webinars, and managing the public services department which includes upwards of 25 full and part-time employees, myself included.

Not only do Pat and Ashley do all of the above with on-campus networking and instruction, they are highly published in their field, active in professional organizations, and understand the importance of holding reference hours at the desk whenever physically possible. We are lucky to have had an amazing crop of law students on the reference desk as they were a boon in dark times helping keep the library open and afloat; however, there is something to be said for a professional librarian sitting behind the desk furthering the mission of the library by supporting the instructional, research, and scholarly endeavors of the law school community. It would have been devastating to lose such a fundamental service to budget cuts but they have managed to be available for students, faculty, and public patrons whenever possible even with their incredibly full schedules.

### **Continuing education and conferences.**

Lastly, as a librarian in an academic institution, it is always vital that you be active in the professional community through conferences, webinars, meetings, and publishing. Conferences and memberships in professional organizations can be quite expensive and as a student I underestimated the importance of using them. While I took part in ALA, WLA, SCALA, and SAA as a student, it was in a severely limited and passive role mainly consisting of dues payments. Luckily, as a library professional, if one is unable to find

the funds to take part and attend professional conferences due to library budget constraints, scholarships and grants are almost always available to apply for. It comes as no shock that not only do many of these conferences and webinars help educate the librarians attending, but they are a great way to network with others in the field to learn new and interesting ideas and events not discussed through scheduled sessions.

### **Advice for future Special Librarians**

If there is one thing I could go back and tell my graduate school cohort in 2015, it is to understand the confines that budget cuts can push onto an already limited staff; each member becomes even more instrumental and important to the operational body that makes up a functional library. As previously described, each librarian will have a role to fill when budgets are slashed, be it instruction, reference, event planning, supervising, coding, networking, or all of the above. Do not just focus on the coursework that you think will benefit you in your chosen field, educate yourself on many topics even those that seem at odds with your major and absorb it all because it might be you that has to update your library website's code in the future. 📖

### **Newton's Third Law-2 *continued from page 20***

C: Develop a relationship with the activities staff and administrators at the facilities. They can be very helpful letting you know about people who may be interested in materials. Also, learn as much as you can about medical conditions, mental health issues, and levels of dementia.

S: Thank you for your time and heartfelt dedication, Colleen! 📖

# Six Degrees of Preparation

by Kris Becker

When I started school for my library degree, I had been working in a public library for three years. It was a bit frustrating to know that even if I could answer a question the patron asked, I still had to send them to the reference

desk. I wasn't officially qualified because I didn't have that piece of paper with my name and MSLIS on it. Funny enough, I had just applied for a part time job in the neighboring town and was hired into their reference department. Even funnier, the directors of those libraries were married. To each other. I was determined to

go to school and get the degree so I wouldn't be excluded from jobs. Most of the time it doesn't matter if I have a degree because everyone who works at the library is vital, knowledgeable and capable of changing a life for the better. I learned this from working day in and day out at the library with the most patient and caring people. Here are just a few things I didn't realize I would need to know upon acceptance of my first job in a public library.

I've played the role of janitor, bomb inspector, bartender and medic. It didn't occur to me this might be strange. It wasn't until I read about librarians saving people who had overdosed that I began to wonder at all the different services, training and emotions we take on by working in a library. It can be draining. Wondrous. Life changing. Grueling. Bone-wearying. Joyous. We can be on this roller coaster of emotions in just a day. Patrons trust us with some of their most private information. They sometimes have a hard time coming through our doors, being around people or asking for help. Their worries, grievances and stress become ours in the moment of interaction. These aren't things I learned in a class while also studying YA lit and HTML. It's something I relearn everyday on the job; we all do.

We treat everyone equally. No one tells you how hard this can be. Of course, the patrons that laugh with you will receive easy camaraderie, but what about those who test our last bit of patience? Just picture a Thursday afternoon on the public service floor,

school has just let out, kids and teens are streaming in (when I say streaming, I mean practically running with elbows flying to commandeer one of the three teen computers), the adult computers

are full, and it's an hour before you are free to enjoy the sunshine. Did I mention the printer has been on the fritz all day? And there's a queue building for the 3D printer? Oh, and someone just handed you 300 pages of documents to scan for their work. I'm guessing we've all been here and while we might feel that our last nerve is taut, we take a deep

breath, smile and continue to help those in need because it's what we do.

We teach technology equally. I remember when Kindles, tablets, and smartphones (oh my!) were walked into the library with their owners asking us, "How do I use this thing?" It was only because patrons handed their devices to me, that I began to learn the newest and latest devices on the market. Remember the Polaroid tablet? (It's almost extinct; I've only seen one in the wild.) Technology is an area we study in school, but continue to learn on the job when apps are refreshed or something shiny and new (VR and AR) comes onto the market. Granted, as soon as we learn the technology, it rapidly becomes yesterday's news so it would be hard to teach the latest and greatest. But I wonder if instead, we took classes on how to teach patrons.

At the orientation for grad school, we went around the room introducing ourselves with the usual name, library experience and type of library we'd like to focus on in school. I was amazed at how many people did not currently work at a library or had ever. I was stunned when the gal next to me said this degree was her back up plan. (She'd just finished a Masters in English and would then go on to get a Doctorate in English.) Library school taught me many useful skills, like web design, cataloging and the essence of the reference interview. But the real learning? That's everything that's taken place since! 📖

**“I’ve played the role of janitor, bomb inspector, bartender and medic. It didn’t occur to me this might be strange.”**

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*Kris Becker is an Acquisitions Librarian with the Jefferson County Library.*

# Podcasts from the Storage Room

by Cameron Johnson

Everett Public Library podcast #1 was conceived ten years ago as a way to preserve the vivid historical storytelling of David Dilgard, an eloquent local historian with deep community ties. The podcast version of David's wildly successful live tours through Everett's [Evergreen Cemetery](#) was released in October 2008 and went on to win a League of Snohomish County Heritage Organization's Malstrom Award, and a Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation Award for Education. [Peggy Roars Again](#), about our historic bookmobile, also drew a lot of attention. From these early podcasts, the library got a lot of earned media and, with this auspicious start, our management committed fully to the podcast format.

Library staff have gone on to produce about 300 podcasts in what has become five categories—[Everett Voices](#) and [Smokestack Soundbites](#) (two local history series), a library director's podcast, [The Lone Reader](#) (book reviews), [Mr. Neutron's Record Closet](#)

(music reviews), and [The Treatment](#) (movie reviews). Our early history podcasts ensured that we already had some great material and a ready audience (even though these historical pieces were longer than we now publish) and allowed us to figure out some of the technical and stylistic aspects of podcasting. We partially cleared a storeroom in our basement, spent a modest amount on audio gear and software, and got going. To the local history podcasts we soon added the director's podcast and book reviews. Two-and-a-half years ago, we added the music and film reviews. Each comes out monthly. Our podcasts have gotten progressively shorter — most are now two to five minutes long, and that's where yours need to be.

## Stylistic aspects

To keep and hold the public's attention, library podcasts must be short, well-written for spoken voice, tightly edited, and well performed, and must be released on a predictable cycle. They should be branded and personal, maybe bring some attitude. And even if they are “only” reviews, they must stand on their own as compelling pieces. No one — except maybe their mothers — will listen to a couple of librarians riff on a book for an hour. I'm talking

less than three minutes for a book, five minutes for a music or movie review (song and movie excerpts are longer).

Each of our three review podcasts has a themed introduction for simple branding. Ron Averill, who not only talks about music but also makes it, wrote and performed his own theme song. I plucked Alan Jacobson's *The Treatment* theme, “Factory for My Father,” by the John Benson Quartet, from Internet Archive. *The Lone Reader* theme is a voice and a gunshot. Every intro contains a plug for the library.

“No one — except maybe their mothers — will listen to a couple of librarians riff on a book for an hour.”

We've evolved into using a “radio theater” approach, which provides interest and variety: theme music, multiple readers as appropriate, judicious use of sound effects, background music, clips of reviewed material. We select background music to reflect and amplify the piece's mood. For [books about war](#), for example, I

usually choose screaming, chaotic punk, or heavy metal music. For *The Boys in the Boat* I chose Orff's heroic “Carmina Burana,” and inserted the S.S. anthem “Horst Wessel Lied” when I mention the Nazi officials in the reviewing stand. For Frans Bentsson's Viking saga *The Long Ships*, I chose a medieval tune. Careful matching of music to subject is key.

We draw files from sites like [Freesound](#), [Soundclick](#), [Internet Archive](#), [YouTube](#), and [ccMixter](#), which provide Creative Commons music and sound effects. We draw heavily on public domain audio as well. Our own podcasts are produced under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license](#).

## Technical aspects

Radio-theater style requires interleaving audio files, which means careful editing. Audio editing is an exercise in technical synesthesia. You can get very good at seeing sounds, even to the degree of picking out ending letters by recognizing wave shape. This skill is essential for editing quickly — it's faster to edit out a vocal flub than to re-record a segment. And editing sometimes requires the cobbler's art: I once made a “fire cacophony” file from various fire sounds, shouting men, bell ringing, a whooshing noise, and horses whinnying.

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*Cameron Johnson is a reference librarian at Everett Public Library.*

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Our toolbox consists of a Marantz PMD661 recorder (about \$600), two Electrovoice Shock-Mounted Dynamic Omni Directional microphones (about \$180 each). We edit with Adobe Audition cc2018 is a \$21 per month subscription at this time. We kept the old Marantz PMD660 recorder we started with, which, though it has a power problem, is a bit easier to capture line-audio with.

We host our podcast through Libsyn, which posts our content to iTunes and Google Play Music, publishes a generic feed for podcast apps, creates a web page for individual episodes, and offers a customizable web player for use on our website.

#### **Benefits and costs**

Building an audience takes time, so you must prepare for the long haul. You must publish consistently, if not often. You must take pains. Every podcast should be seamless, as perfect as you can make it (given normal constraints) so as not to distract listeners from content. Gathering files and editing a two- to five-minute podcast might take two to four hours. Administrators, take note.

The library's audiovisual team both oversees and contributes to podcasts. Alan has taught film at the college level, and Ron (besides having a D.Mus. degree in composition) had his own radio show in Bellingham. My undergrad degree was in journalism and I did a volunteer gig at KSER, Everett's Pacifica-affiliated community radio station. But every library is bristling with surprising talent, and getting others involved is one of the joys of the work. We have included at least a dozen staff readers in our various projects, including the library's custodian Van Ramsey, a musician in his own right, whose self-created Silas Pettibone character in [Buffalo Bill in the City of Smokestacks](#) nearly stole the show! I love working with my colleagues' creative side. I love making them shine. I love showing our library's vitality.

The library focuses on cross-pollinating podcast production with

other library objectives. The Lone Reader often reviews books of authors appearing at the library. Alan uses his Treatment podcasts to promote some of his curated film talks. Ron's podcasts feed interest in local music, which in turn feeds interest in the library. This fall Ron will take the stage here at the library to present a live program about local music. Recently the City of Everett's cable channel has begun to run video versions of some of our historical podcasts, using images in a slide-show format. Our Social Media



*Cameron Johnson demonstrates the art of audio editing in Adobe Premiere.*

Team points to new podcast releases, and that helps get the word out, too.

According to Libsyn, a typical Lone Reader or Treatment podcast (released monthly) will be uniquely downloaded 350 times. Mr. Neutron can earn as many as 800 downloads. These numbers indicate a following, and that is highly gratifying.

#### **Always Keep Moving**

Keeping it fresh matters. The team is talking about what's next. Maybe an interview format, but still short and sweet. Would love to hear your ideas. [Drop me a line.](#) 📖

## Podcasts Go to the Movies

by Alan Jacobson

When asked to do a movie podcast, I thought, “do you mean a vodcast?” and “is that a term?” I couldn’t imagine people would want this, nor could I imagine how an audiovisual art form could be done justice in an audio format. Then I remembered movie radio ads I’d made in college long ago, striving for “theater of the mind,” where audio is evocative enough to conjure images, creating a rich experience, engaging the listener’s imagination, like in long-ago the [golden age of radio](#).

And I searched for much more recent inspiration. I devoured the brilliant [You Must Remember This](#), a pod about Hollywood’s secret and/or forgotten history. I enjoyed the conversational [Craig’s List](#). I studied the pods of my colleagues at the library, settling on a blend of that old radio, elements of other pods, and trusted that my natural enthusiasm and hoity-toity film vocabulary would carry it across.

[As a film history teacher at the college level](#), and lover of the form since birth, I get something out of every movie I see and have been told I have a gift to share that. This is how we do monthly film discussions live at [Evergreen Cinema Society](#): I select the film(s), research from books, videos, articles, etc., and present. We watch, I take notes. We discuss. I take more. Appreciation and knowledge (mine included) skyrockets.

[I’ve taught/presented hundreds of films](#). So, [The Treatment](#) is based on my experience, and the collective experiences, history, and artistry of the particular movie, including all discussions. And though it was difficult not to scream “Attica!” through the entirety of my exploration of [Sidney Lumet’s incredible slice of New York City life, Dog Day Afternoon](#), I somehow kept to script, aspiring toward that ineffable theater of the mind. [Listen](#).



*Alan Jacobson lays down some “Treatment” tracks in the Northwest Room storage space, which doubles as our podcast studio.*

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*Alan Jacobson is the manager of the Evergreen Branch of Everett Public Library.*

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## Mr. Neutron's Record Closet

by Ron Averill

In a world filled with overwhelming choices, it's handy to have someone tell you what music to listen to. [Mr. Neutron](#) is that someone.

An astonishing amount of fabulous music comes out of the Pacific Northwest, much of it falling to the floor unlistened-to and unloved. Why, it's a chore to simply find out what groups exist let alone what their music sounds like or how good they might be! Fortunately, Mr. Neutron's Record Closet is filled to the brim with Northwest music, much of it culled from the stacks of Everett Public Library.

In an effort to promote Everett Public Library's local music collection, along with local music in general, Mr. Neutron's Record Closet presents tracks from many genres, focusing on those bands that call the greater Seattle area home. From the Young Fresh Fellows to [Neko Case](#) to the Frantics, [Clambake](#), and beyond, the revelry recommences the third Tuesday of every month.

Each podcast, Mr. Neutron examines the music of one or more local bands, providing excerpts of songs, background information and even the occasional technical tidbit about why the music sounds like it sounds. Top this off with valiant attempts at humor and a vocal delivery that could only be produced by the love child of Wolfman Jack and Richard Simmons, and well sir, you've got yourself some quality edutainment.

Not bad for free.

So come on, hear the noise and check out this quirky podcast that has been called *pointless shenanigans* and *more exciting than a comb museum*. You won't regret it. 📖



*Mr. Neutron, Ron Averill, uses podcasts to raise listeners' consciousness about notable local and regional music.*

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*Ron Averill is a library technician senior at Everett Public Library.*

# Of Words and Nerds: Start Planning Now for the PNW's Biggest Kidlit Weekend of the Year

by Adam Shaffer

Have you heard the word, nerd? A little winter weekend in February has been brewing up big children's literature fun in Northwest Washington.

The last weekend in February is the traditional date for two big events in Bellingham, WA. For 15 years, Western Washington University has held its Children's Literature Conference on the last Saturday. As if this premiere event was not satisfying enough, nErDcamp Bellingham has steadily grown as a Sunday companion event since 2015.

The [Children's Literature Conference](#) (CLC) started in 2004, with Suzanne Fisher Staples, Keith Baker, and Pam Muñoz Ryan as speakers, and a cozy 150 or so attendees. It has since grown considerably -- 2018 was its fourth consecutive sellout, as 600 lucky attendees found inspiration, joy, and contemplation from a literal "who's who" of children's literature notables. Popular with educators, librarians, aspiring and published authors and illustrators, the CLC has become the Northwest's most sought after kidlit ticket.

This year, speakers Sophie Blackall, Benjamin Alire Sáenz, Kevin Henkes, and a returning Pam Muñoz Ryan wowed attendees with a series of talks focused on their inspirations, methods, perspectives, and insights. Next year's conference -- the sweet sixteenth -- features Barbara O'Connor, Eric Rohmann and Candace Fleming, Neal and Jarrod Shusterman (father and son), and Jerry Pinkney. Tickets go on sale in October for the Saturday, February 23, 2019, event. See you there?

For the past four years, a companion event has offered an outlet for the CLC's inspiration and calls to action. [nErDcamp Bellingham](#), a literacy-focused unconference, has grown from 35 attendees in 2015 to 102 at the 2018 event. Held at Whatcom Middle School, in Bellingham, nErDcamp is modeled after the original nErDcamp Michigan, which has spawned over ten nErDcamps across the country. nErDcamp is an "unconference," based on the [EDcamp](#) model, but with a focus on literacy in learning. It is dubbed "nErDcamp" in a nod to the online movement known as [#nerdybookclub](#). An unconference differs from a traditional

conference because the topics and sessions are determined and led by the participants. It is an opportunity for attendees to share their expertise and learn from each other. There are no exhibitors or commercial components. The focus is on sharing and learning. The event is and always will be free of cost.

Like the CLC, nErDcamp appeals to educators, librarians, and authors and illustrators. As an unconference, the learning for the day is driven by the attendees. The schedule board reflects the passions and struggles of committed children's literature advocates. The 2018 event included sessions on teaching comprehension to struggling readers and funding classroom libraries, to an overview of Native American children's literature and author panels. The Western Washington chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators sends a strong contingent every year, and the day provides the opportunity for networking with and learning from published authors and illustrators and also for supporting those who are aspiring to find publication themselves.

When you walk into nErDcamp, you can feel the energy in the room. These are all people committed to children and children's literature. They've sacrificed a Sunday -- you know how precious those weekends are -- to spend time learning, sharing, and growing together. They travel from Oregon, from Canada, and some from even farther afield, to feed off their common interests and passions. When the room breaks for sessions, it is with buzzes of anticipation and excitement.

The fifth nErDcamp Bellingham will again take place the day after the CLC, Sunday, February 24, 2019. Free, as always. Maybe see you there, too?

If you are nerdy about children's literature and reading and writing, there is no better weekend than the end of February. On Saturday, be energized and inspired by children's literature luminaries at the WWU Children's Literature Conference (but register early!). On Sunday, harness that energy and inspiration, recognize that we are all both experts and learners, and spend a day geeking out with 100 or so of your colleagues at nErDcamp Bellingham. 📖

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*Adam Shaffer is a librarian at Irene Reither Elementary, Meridian School District, Laurel, Washington.*

# #LibrarySnapshot Makes Every Day “Library Snapshot Day”

by Kari Whitney

Library Snapshot Day began in 2009 as a New Jersey Libraries self-advocacy project. Financial times were tough, and it was imperative that the legislature and the public understood the vital services performed daily in libraries throughout the state. Library staff collected statistics, stories, and photographs to document all that took place on a single day, and this information was shown to lawmakers, published in newspapers, and celebrated throughout their communities. The American Association of Libraries brought the initiative to a national level a year later and continues now to encourage states to adopt similar moment-in-time data collection.



The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL)

April 1-15, 2018 was Washington’s eighth year promoting and supporting Library Snapshot Day. More than 35 public, school, academic, and special libraries across the state populated Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with photos and announcements of ongoing and special library events, as well as patron and student testimonials about the significance of these institutions in their lives. More than 125 posts bearing the #LibrarySnapshot hashtag graced the social media screens of patrons and politicians. Photos showed off ongoing programming, special events, everyday patronage, technology



UW Health Sciences Library shares some #LibrarySnapshot stats on Twitter.



School librarian Kate Eads shares the contents of her trunk on Twitter.



Special events are great fodder for #LibrarySnapshots.

installations, book displays, and lots and lots of children!

Libraries and patrons enjoyed the celebratory nature of this project, but it hasn’t ended yet! We all now have a fantastic collection of



Lacey Timberland Library’s first #LibrarySnapshot of 2018 on Facebook.

imagery and statistics to tell our institutional and community stories! Continue to share your photos and stories to ensure that the vibrancy of your programming sticks in people’s memories: repost your favorites on social media with #TBT (Throwback Thursday) or make an infographic poster for your walls and website. When you talk to potential funding sources (i.e., donors and Friends

groups), refer back to the numbers you recorded: the families who came to storytime, the attendance at a resume workshop, the number of hits on your website, or the amount of foot traffic systemwide. (Are you excited now? Email [info@wla.org](mailto:info@wla.org) to find out how you can get

involved with WLA in taking your library stories to the Washington State Legislature next winter!)

Visit [www.wla.org](http://www.wla.org) for links to #LibrarySnapshot social media posts as well as guidance for organizing your institution’s participation next year!

Kari Whitney is a MLIS student at the University of Washington iSchool. She helped promote Washington Library Snapshot Day.

# Milestones

Milestones focuses on significant moments for libraries statewide – recognizing notable new hires, transitions, expansions and retirements, as well as remembrances of those who have passed. We're looking for submissions, of approximately 250 words, that highlight notable accomplishments in the careers of those profiled. Photographs are encouraged. Please send information to [alkieditor@wla.org](mailto:alkieditor@wla.org).

## RECOGNITION

Over the past 33 years, **Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory** has left her mark on Snohomish and Island counties.

On May 17, the Sno-Isle Libraries executive director was recognized for that commitment to people and communities with the Elson S. Floyd Award from [Economic Alliance Snohomish County \(EASC\)](#). The award is named for the late Washington State University president who played a key role in establishing the WSU Everett campus.

“I couldn’t be more honored to accept this award for myself but also on behalf of Sno-Isle Libraries,” Woolf-Ivory said. “It is important for Sno-Isle Libraries to be recognized by Economic Alliance Snohomish County for the library’s focus on community partnership, commitment to improving the community’s quality of life, and its work to make a positive impact on the region’s economy.”

Paul Pitre, chancellor of WSU Everett, presented the award during Thursday’s EASC annual meeting at the Tulalip Resort Casino.

“She believes that public libraries should serve as a hub for people, ideas and culture,” he said of Woolf-Ivory. “She sees libraries as a doorway to reading, a doorway to new and innovative resources, and a doorway to lifelong learning.”

“Jonalyn will retire at the end of the year,” he added. “We will all be sad to see her go. We will also be grateful for the impact she has had on this community throughout her career.”

Pitre read a congratulatory message from Carmento Floyd, Elson Floyd’s widow.

“Elson strongly believed in the power of education, and nothing was more important than everyone having access and opportunity,” she wrote. “Thank you for your commitment to providing the best opportunities for citizens of that region. Again, congratulations – and Go Cougs!”

Woolf-Ivory earned her undergraduate degree in political science from WSU. While she received a master’s in library and information science from the University of Washington, Woolf-Ivory remains a steadfast supporter of the WSU Cougars.

The Elson S. Floyd Award is especially meaningful to her family, she said. “My grandad, my mother, my uncle and my son. We are all Cougars, and we all just bring Cougar spirit.”

Community-program achievements under Woolf-Ivory’s direction include the

ongoing Issues That Matter series, bringing thoughtful and frank discussions on difficult topics to communities. She also initiated the award-winning three-year run of TEDxSnoIsleLibraries.

Serving nearly 750,000 residents through 23 community libraries, online services and Library on Wheels. In the past two years, Woolf-Ivory led the organization opened demonstration libraries in two underserved communities: the Mariner area near 128th Street and I-5, and the Lakewood/Smokey Point area near Arlington.

“It’s important to me that Sno-Isle Libraries is a tenacious good



*WSU Everett Chancellor Paul Pitre and Sno-Isle Libraries Executive Director Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory*

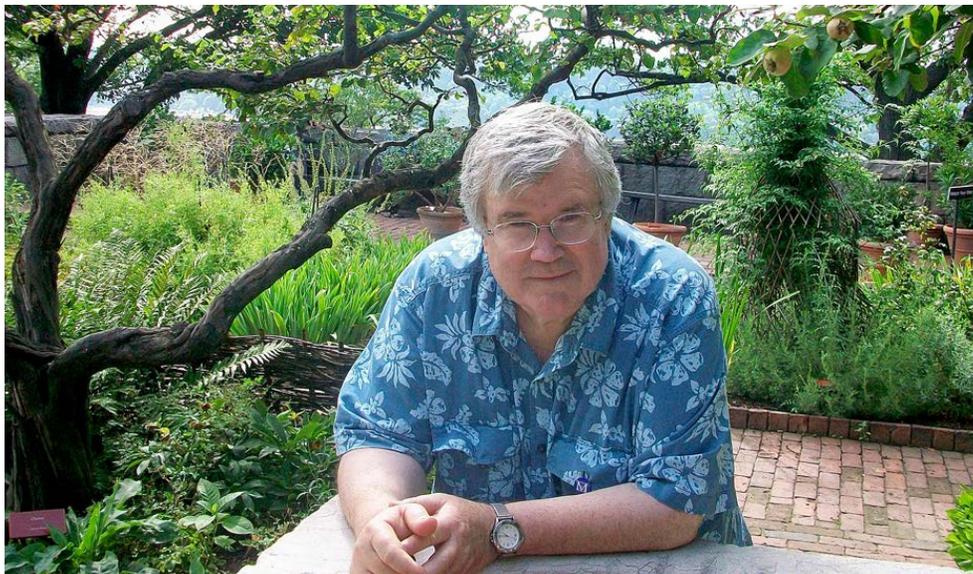
neighbor to all of our partners and to each of you,” Woolf-Ivory told Thursday’s audience.

Woolf-Ivory is an active participant in local organizations that support civic engagement and address the needs of the community. She is a member of the Economic Alliance of Snohomish County Board, the Compass Health Board of Directors, and the Snohomish County Health Leadership Coalition. Woolf-Ivory has also served on the board of Leadership Snohomish County, including a term as president, and on the board of the Interfaith Association of Northwest Washington.

--Julie Titone

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Two school librarians from Washington State were recently awarded American Association of School Librarians’ (AASL) Inspire Grants. **Stacy Udo**, of Olympia High School, received the Inspire Collection Development Grant for her proposed Olympia Needs Diverse Books (ONDB) project, which intends “to bring more diverse books, movies, and magazines into the Olympia High School (OHS) Library, so that all students may see themselves and/or increase understanding of others within our diverse world...” **Jeff Treistman**, of Denny International Middle School, was awarded the Inspire Special Event Grant, which will go toward funding the Home Libraries Project, which ensures that students, many of whom don’t have access to books or libraries during the summer, go home with fun new books of their own this summer.



*David Dilgard at The Cloisters, New York*

The American Association of School Librarians [www.aasl.org](http://www.aasl.org), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), empowers leaders to transform teaching and learning.

### IN MEMORIAM

**David Dilgard**, Northwest Room historian at the Everett Public Library for 40 years, passed away May 17. He was 73. Through his work at EPL, David brought history alive, presenting at schools and other local organizations. From recording oral histories of Everett residents to creating an award-winning podcast tour of the Evergreen Cemetery, he was always finding new ways to reach people.

David was described by many as a walking encyclopedia of all things Everett and Northwest history, able to switch seamlessly from discussing architecture to the Everett Massacre. His storytelling was engaging and entertaining, drawing the listener in as he painted a picture with his words. Even when the topic was heavy, David had a unique way of making his audience laugh and enjoy learning about what could be an otherwise dusty, dull topic.

Everett and Snohomish County citizens and historians truly valued David’s hard work and contributions. He’s the recipient of a William F. Brown Award (Everett Historical Commission), a lifetime achievement award (League of Snohomish County Heritage Organizations), and a Robert Gray Medal (Washington State Historical Society).

Over the course of his career David published several local history books including *Mill Town Footlights* about vaudeville and theatre in Everett, and *Dark Deeds: True Tales of Territorial Treachery and Terror!*, wherein three historic Snohomish County crimes are dramatically presented in the raiment of Victorian fiction.

In addition to his work at the library, David was a poet, artist, musician, husband, and friend.

--Carol Ellison 📖

# Read This Book

## Summer STEM Reads

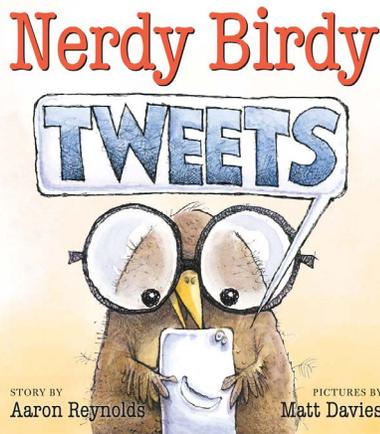
by Brooke Shirts and the Puget Sound Council for the Review of Children's and Young Adult Literature

Something nobody tells you before working in a school library: plan for summer library work. For families who live too far away from public libraries, neighborhood school libraries are often the only way to obtain reading materials during the summer. And while summertime with children usually conjures up images of poolside lounging or camping under the stars, a new seasonal phenomenon has emerged in recent years: summer STEM camps. Summer enrichment options like LEGO engineering courses, summer coding classes, or girls-only science camps are becoming increasingly popular -- but they are often expensive. How to level the playing field for kids whose families who can't afford the tuition? Many school libraries are attempting to close the gap by offering STEM activities or "Maker Labs" as part of their summer open hours.

A wealth of new STEM-oriented literature is hitting bookshelves in recent months. Our reviewers are picking up on the trend and are spotting the best-written materials for young readers, some of which we've listed here. If you're looking for something to inspire yourself or your readers, whether in the lab or in story-time, Read This Book!

### ***Nerdy Birdy Tweets.***

Reynolds, Aaron. Illus. Matt Davies. Roaring Brook Press, 2017. ISBN: 9781626721289. Grades K-6. Reviewed by Teresa Bateman, Brigadoon and Olympic View Elementaries, Federal Way.



Nerdy Birdy and his friend, Vulture, are back for another adventure together...or are they? Nerdy Birdy has acquired a number of new friends online, on Tweetster. He's spending so much time with them that he is ignoring the friend who is right there in front of him. Vulture tries to break him of the habit, but finally gives in and joins Tweetster, too. Unfortunately Nerdy Birdy posts something about his friend that upsets Vulture. He thought it was funny, but Vulture finds it embarrassing. Can this friendship be saved? Only

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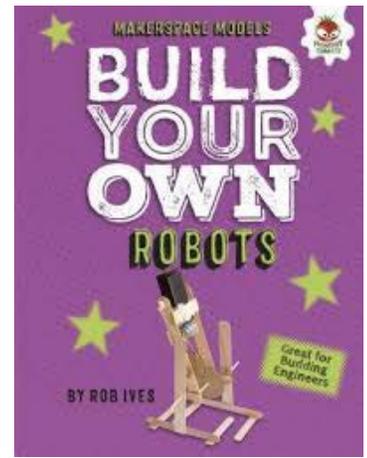
Brooke Shirts is the Chairperson of the Puget Sound Council for the Review of Children's and Young Adult Literature.

with a sincere apology and a change in behavior. This is a timely book that fits neatly in with the required Digital Citizenship curriculum for districts to maintain their e-rate. Buy. Buy. Buy.

***Build Your Own Robots.*** Ives, Rob. Hungry Tomato, 2018. ISBN: 9781512459708

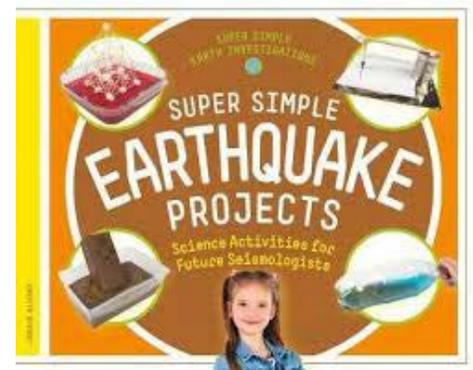
Grades 3-5. Reviewed by Paula Burton, Fall City Library.

Simple tools and items make eight robot-like projects. Easy-to-follow steps with colorful photographs make the projects seem not too difficult. Most projects are featured on one spread with a few that have one or two more pages. There is always an explanation of how your robot works in the real world. The contents page shows all the projects at a glance by title, and prior to that there is a "safety first" section. The projects are followed by a glossary that explains the real world terms and an index. Build Your Own Robots is part of the Makerspace Models series. Other titles are *Build Your Own Boats*, *Build Your Own Land Vehicles*, and *Build Your Own Rockets and Planes*. The reviewers rating is not based on the projects themselves, or the difficulty of making these robots. This would be a great series for a makerspace or classroom activities related to science.



### ***Super Simple Earthquake Projects: Science Activities For Future Seismologists.***

Alkire, Jessie. Super Sandcastle, 2017. ISBN: 9781532112362. Grades 2-4. Reviewed by Teresa Bateman, Brigadoon and



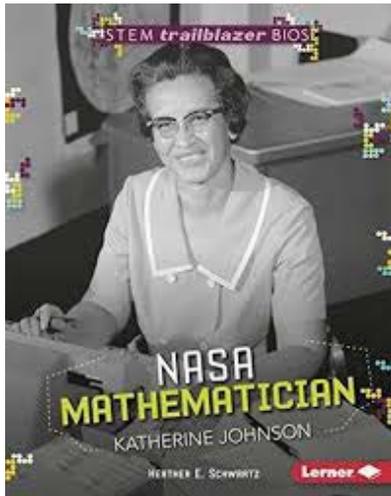
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Olympic View Elementaries, Federal Way Public Schools.

What are earthquakes? What causes them? What can result from them? These are questions approached by this science experiment book. Six step-by-step scientific experiments help young scientists examine plate tectonics, seismic waves, and building to withstand earthquakes, liquefaction, and tsunamis. They also teach how to create a simple seismograph. Each experiment includes a materials list and clear instructions, with photographs to illustrate key points. They vary in difficulty, but would be handy for science fairs, or to deepen student understand of these concepts in geology units. The book also begins with a clear introduction to the topic and ends with a quiz and a glossary. This is a solid addition to earthquake collections that will lead to hands-on learning.

***NASA Mathematician  
Katherine Johnson.***

Schwartz, Heather E.  
Lerner Classroom, 2017.  
ISBN: 9781512457032.  
Grades 2-4. Reviewed  
by Karen Kline, Sunset  
Elementary, Issaquah.

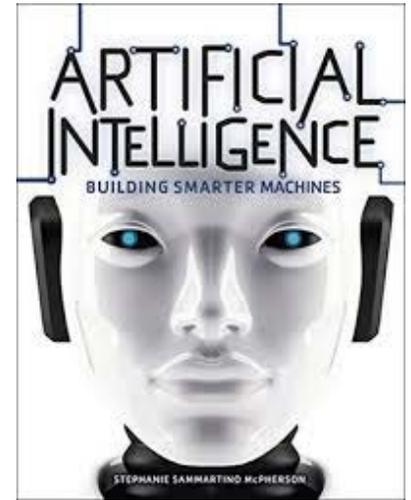


This inspiring biography of math whiz Katherine Johnson (whose life was featured in the movie *Hidden Figures*) is a book that shows the civil-liberty obstacles that women of color

have faced in the US. The book states it is unlikely that Johnson would have had an opportunity to work in the aeronautics field if World War II had not taken so many men out of the jobs in her area and onto the war fronts. Johnson's important work as a NASA mathematician is captured in the text citing John Glenn's concern about machine computers and his asking Johnson to check the math before he would rely on the calculations that took him to the moon and back. Johnson's persistence in asking questions is a central theme of the story, and readers will be reminded of the knack she also had for humility and grace despite her gifted skills. Period photos on every page support the text and bring the facts to life. Glossary, index, timeline, and list of additional reading included.

***Artificial Intelligence: Building Smarter Machines.*** Mcpherson, Stephanie Sam. Twenty-First Century Books, 2017. ISBN: 9781512418262. Grades 6-12. Reviewed by Anne Dame, Albert Einstein Middle School, Shoreline.

Which is smarter - a person or a computer? The answer: it depends. The machines we build are getting smarter all the time, and the way we build them enables them to make themselves even smarter. Do these machines really think? Do they have that capacity? This book attempts to answer these questions and look at scenarios where this may be the future. It's a fairly extensive look at this



topic and while there is not a definitive answer, it gives the reader a lot of history and a lot of information. If it is something they are interested in, it also gives them what they need to pursue it further. The technology talked about in the book is explained in language that is relatively easy to understand and things are explained contextually as much as possible but there is also a glossary at the back. The progression of technology is sequential and logical. Interspersed with full color photographs and interesting factual text boxes. Comprehensive source notes, selected bibliography, and index at the back. There is a fairly extensive list of books, films, and websites for those seeking further information about this topic. Timely now, but will be outdated quickly. 📖

# Join WLA

The Washington Library Association includes some of the best and brightest members of the Washington library community.

We are united by our care for the well-being of Washington libraries. For more information, visit our website at [wla.org](http://wla.org). Explore the site and make our business your business.

Membership information is at [wla.org/membership](http://wla.org/membership).

# I'd Rather Be Reading

by David Wright



## Kill Your Darlings

Many of us were drawn to work in libraries out of a love of books and reading. While only the most naïve applicants would be surprised that a library position doesn't equate with blissful hours of reading on the job, many booklovers might not be quite ready for the literary carnage that awaits them. We call it weeding, and the metaphor is a good one: well-weeded libraries bloom. Yet for lifelong readers who revere books as objects, their first brush with de-acquisition can be a bit like learning how the sausage is made.

My own initiation to these sacrificial rites was more extreme than most. I wasn't new to weeding: I'd blithely tossed legal books by the dumpsterful as a law library technician, and had done some weeding in small public library branches, a constant battle waged in linear inches. Still, I'd been a full-time librarian for less than a year when a (thankfully more experienced) colleague and I were given a Herculean task. Our Augean stables was a building on the top of Seattle's Queen Anne Hill that had been used for decades as a remote storage facility. It was being repurposed, and there was nowhere for all those books to go.

The outer wall of the vast main hall was lined with fiction. Scores of bookcases holding thousands of novels dating back to the last years of the 19th century. The term "decimate" is derived from the Roman practice of putting one in ten of a vanquished foe to the sword. Our assignment was the inverse. We were to get rid of ninety percent of the collection. Not a decimation, but a - what is the word? Ah yes: a massacre.

This was before smartphones and Wi-Fi, and as I recall the whole building had only one computer. We could check circulation on some things, but with a tight timeline much of this weeding had to be done on the fly. My coworker and I could be heard calling to each other across the cavernous space: do we really need a full set of Paul de Kock? Wow: people are still reading Grace Livingston Hill, but for how much longer? The early Eric Amblers are coming

back into print – do we save the late ones? Is Anatole France due for a revival? Is Arnold Bennett? Why on earth do we still have this? – did they make a movie of it? I think it won a Pulitzer, back in the twenties; better keep it. Oh my god look at this: put it in the just-too-adorable-to-toss pile, most of which we'll toss.

**“When the dust and mold spores settled, we'd hacked and slashed a warehouse down to a stack of boxes, stocking what must have been one of the most amazing Friends of the Library book sales ever.”**

When the dust and mold spores settled, we'd hacked and slashed a warehouse down to a stack of boxes, stocking what must have been one of the most amazing Friends of the Library book sales ever. Many Northwest and Washington State authors were preserved, lost treasures restored to light, and solid mid-list performers kept available for their readers. Very many more were tossed. As a result, our library grew more manageable and attractive, and a bit less curious and arcane. To this day, I wonder

if my enthusiasm for neglected classics and rediscovered reprints isn't some kind of post-traumatic response to that bloody, bloody weed.

I once heard a library executive advising a group of library school students that they no longer needed to take courses in collection development, as this was outmoded. I presume this bit of misinformation was based on the fact that larger library systems typically have centralized selection, but it is lousy advice. Public service librarians remain key players in curating and shaping their collections through acquisition, promotion, and weeding.

Most newly minted librarians won't be called upon to weed nine-tenths of a collection, but we all need to be ready to kill the thing we love, in great numbers. This is one of those dark little trade secrets that still shocks the public, and the occasional new librarian. But gird your loins, and you may come to find de-accession its own kind of therapy, one of the reliably mundane pleasures of our work. Soon enough, when some project is going haywire, or the online chat window is haranguing you, or a difficult patron interaction is wringing you out, you'll find yourself saying "I'd rather be weeding."



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*David Wright is a reader services librarian at the Central Branch of The Seattle Public Library, a frequent speaker and trainer at library conferences, and a regular contributor to Booklist, The Seattle Times, and other publications.*

# Dispatches from Swellville

by Darcy McMurtery



Memo:

From: Human Resources, Swellville Public Library  
Subject: Updated Training Plans  
To: All Staff

Please see chart for updated training plans for our "Other Duties as Assigned" Category

SUBJECT	SCHEDULED CLASS	ON THE JOB
Animals:		
--Programs		X
--Rehoming		X
--Removal of		X
Apparel:		
--Emergency Hemming		X
--Loss of Button		X
--Patron Tag Removal		X
Bookmobile Engine Troubleshooting		X
Counseling on Desk	Interpersonal Communication	
--Drunks		X
--Marital		X
--Parent-Child		X
Feces		
--Removal of		X
--Reporting		X
First Aid	First Aid	
Insects/Spiders		
--Bites		X
--Removal		X
Medical (See First Aid)		
Mushrooms		
--Field Identification		X
Plumbing	Facilities Reporting	
--Faucets		X
--Toilets		X
Poker Face Perfection		X
Potlucks		
--Avoiding	Interpersonal Communication	
--Planning	Is Management Right for You?	
Random Trivia and Crossword Puzzles		X

Darcy McMurtery is a cranky librarian who knits, writes and attempts karate.

# WLA Thanks Our Organizational Members

## Organizational Members

Asotin County Library  
Bellingham Public Library  
Big Bend Community College, Bonaudi Library  
Centralia College Library  
Clark College Library  
Clover Park Technical College Library  
Community Colleges of Spokane - Library Services  
Eastern Washington University Libraries  
Ellensburg Public Library  
Everett Public Library  
Foley Ctr. Library Gonzaga University  
Fort Vancouver Regional Library District  
Grandview Library  
Green River Community College  
Highland Terrace Elementary  
Jefferson County Library  
King County Library System  
Kitsap Regional Library  
La Conner Regional Library District  
Longview Public Library  
Lopez Island Library  
National Network of Libraries of Medicine, PNW Region  
Neill Public Library  
North Central Regional Library  
North Seattle College  
Orcas Island Library District  
Port Townsend Public Library  
Primary Source  
Puyallup Public Library

Ritzville Library District #2  
San Juan Island Library  
Seattle Central College Library  
Seattle Public Library  
Sedro-Woolley City Library  
Skagit Valley College/Norwood  
Sno-Isle Libraries  
Spokane County Library District  
Spokane Public Library  
Stevens County Rural Library District  
Tacoma Public Library  
The Evergreen State College  
Timberland Regional Library  
University of Washington Libraries  
Upper Skagit Library  
Walla Walla Community College Library  
Walla Walla County Rural Library District  
Washington State Library  
Whatcom Community College  
Whatcom County Library System  
Whitman County Library  
Yakima Valley College  
Yakima Valley Libraries  
  
Mackin  
Primary Source  
Scholastic  
Seattle Times: Newspapers in Education  
SIRSI DYNIX  
TECH LOGIC  
Winking Kat Books



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