

2009

Reflections on “The World of Autism” in The World of Libraries

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OLA Quarterly



Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories

Oregon's Passage of the Equal Rights Amendment:
Excerpts from "With Grit and By Grace"

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Two Sister Cities, One World:
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One Preconference:
Much Impact

One State, Two Stories:
Getting Here with Magic and Detours

Readers, Readers Everywhere

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**Upcoming
Issue**

Fall 2009

*Oregon's 150th:
Libraries Then and Now*



President's Conference Issue ...

Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories

"And now the old story has begun to write itself over there," said Carl softly. "Isn't it queer: there are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before; like the larks in this country, that have been singing the same five notes for thousands of years."

Willa Cather
O Pioneers!
1913

Were you reminded of Willa Cather's quotation when you heard the OLA conference theme Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories? In this year when the Oregon Library Association ignited reading and discussion statewide through the Oregon Reads program, the importance of stories in identifying patterns resonates in that quotation and in that theme. With no lessening of the uniqueness of each individual's story, exposure to many stories summons us to speak of our commonalities and learn from our histories. "So attention must be paid" to quote Linda Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

The consciousness-raising about prejudice toward immigrants that *Stubborn Twig* fostered is mirrored in the selected excerpts about Oregon's passage of the Equal Rights Amendment by Betty Roberts and Gail Wells. Betty Roberts keynoted at the 2009 OLA Conference and told stories from her legislative and judicial career that are

important to remember. Our present-day workplaces and our lives are better due to the movements of recent history with which Betty and others worked. Betty's stories are rich with lessons about collaboration, consensus, and compromise as illustrated in her memories of the E.R.A. in Oregon. One of the repeated human stories is that patterns of prejudice can be overcome, often assisted by the passage of civil rights statutes.

Patterns of a different nature are sorted out by Robert Hulshof-Schmidt in his article analyzing the 2009 Conference evaluations. Robert's experience with many conferences is evident in his recommendations for future conferences, advice to get involved, and recognition of Oregon's collegial library association.

Proving that the larks in Ukraine sing the same five notes, Maya Tarasova's account of her Sister City visit to the United States of America, Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, and the OLA conference virtually hums with international optimism. Relief and pride that libraries in our two countries share core principles can be heard throughout this piece.

Kim Marsh Read helps us enter the patterned and often solitary world of children with autism. Recounting her learnings from a program at the OLA Conference Kim shares the advice of therapists and a mom about how libraries can better provide service and a welcoming environment to these children.

Improving service to another often misunderstood and underserved group is the subject of my dialogue with Heydi Smith. Heydi had her first OLA conference experience when she attended the "Got Teens?" preconference. Heydi's perspective on the preconference, what she learned, and how she applied what she learned is an example of the cycle of learning we've all undergone at conferences.

Two personal stories of "how I came to work in libraries" by Margaret Harmon-Myers and Bonnie Carolee Hirsch share the pattern of early library use that did not stir interest in the profession despite a love of reading. Follow their career detours to the present where both Margaret and Carolee are library employees engaged in serving the public.

Lauren Kessler's paean exulting in Oregon's readers rounds out the President's issue. Heartened by the fact of "one state, many readers" Lauren brings us back to the compelling theme and pattern of stories "about the power of stories in our lives, about how stories can tell us who we are and who we were." So attention must be paid ...

Guest Editor

Mary Ginnane
Youth Services Manager
Eugene Public Library
OLA President, 2008-09

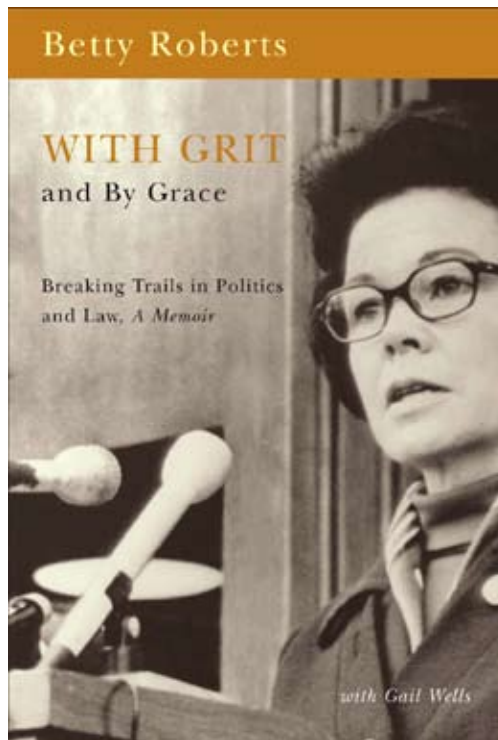
P.S. Please see well-deserved recognition of the Oregon Reads Committee, donors, and partners on the last page of this issue.

Oregon's Passage of the Equal Rights Amendment:

Excerpts from *With Grit and By Grace*

by Betty Roberts
with Gail Wells

(Permission granted to reprint by Oregon State University Press, <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/press>. Betty Roberts was the keynote speaker at the 2009 OLA Annual Conference.)



Soon after opening day Norma Paulus came to my desk on the Senate floor and said, “Betty, we women in the House think we need to form a women’s caucus to talk about getting the ERA passed. Since you’re the senior woman in the Senate I think you should call and chair the meeting.” I hadn’t thought of that, but it made sense. I wouldn’t presume to organize the women in the House, although there was no question in my mind that most of them would work for the ERA, as Betty Browne and I would in the Senate. But Norma’s proposal gave me permission to reach out to them. I called the meeting for late one afternoon in my third-floor committee room.

What a gathering! The incumbent House members, Norma Paulus, Mary Reike, Nancie Fadeley, and Grace Peck, along with Senators Betty Browne and myself, had already proven ourselves effective legislators. Freshmen Representatives Vera

Katz and Mary Burrows were quickly making their mark. Representatives Mary Roberts, Peg Dereli, and Pat Whiting rounded out our caucus. We were a diverse group of Republicans and Democrats ranging in age from thirty to seventy-five, lawyers and housewives, office workers, social workers and union workers, most married but some not, with children from pre-school age to grown and out on their own. The convergence of these women in my committee room was no accident. Every one of us had spirit and a common purpose. We were all warriors. For me, it seemed the cavalry had finally arrived . . .

The final hurdle for the ERA was passage in the House. The House floor debate took place on February 8, 1973, only a week after the Senate vote.

Representative Nancie Fadeley spoke first. She painted a compelling picture of what the ERA would mean to ordinary human beings, black and white, male and female, on a day-to-day basis. She spoke of women in poverty who had children to raise, who had to do lower-status work because they lacked opportunities, who had to settle for lower pay than men.

Representative Bernard Byers, a Democrat from Lebanon, a small town south of Salem, opposed ratification because he believed it wasn’t needed. Women already had laws on equal pay for equal work and other laws could be passed if they were necessary. So there! Short, but not so sweet.

Representative Norma Paulus made a forceful plea:

I believe I can separate the Equal Rights Amendment from the Women’s Movement for those of you who feel uncomfortable about certain aspects of the Women’s Movement. . . . The Women’s Movement purports to change attitudes—I support that movement, wholeheartedly. It seeks to change the attitudes, social attitudes



between men and women. But that's not what the Equal Rights Amendment does. The Equal Rights Amendment seeks to change the government's attitude toward women. Today, I don't care what you men really think of me or what your attitude toward me is, but I do care what the government thinks of me and what its attitude is toward me.

Norma went on in her own unique style to point out that the U.S. Supreme Court had always recognized white males as persons—picking out a good-looking male representative to illustrate her point—but that it had only recently recognized race as a protected status under the law. Here she mentioned Bill McCoy, the only African American representative to have served in the Oregon Legislature; the Court had finally recognized him as a person, but only after “it smelled smoke from the courthouse burning.” The Court, she said, had yet to recognize women as persons. “I know I am a person,” she said. “You know I am a person. And it is about time the United States Supreme Court knew it.”

Vera Katz then had her say. She gave examples of sex discrimination in the “progressive State of Oregon,” pointing out that, because of their sex, women may be barred from renting apartments, buying homes, or receiving loans. They may be denied entrance to vocational or training schools and prohibited from entering public accommodations. There has been an extraordinary change in America, Vera continued, marked by a new surge of idealism and a new insistence on reality in our democratic order. But more must be done, because women are demanding it, and “because, by any moral standard, it is right.”

Opposition then came from Paul Han-neman, a Republican from the coastal town of Cloverdale, where he said he saw men

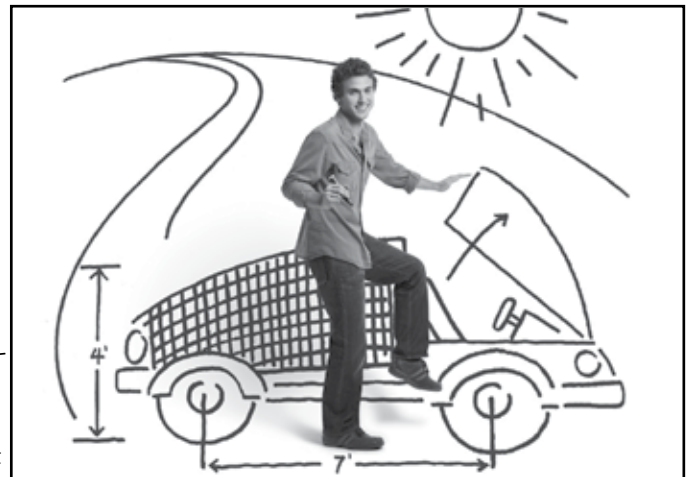
and women working “side by side on the farms, women working in the barns carrying almost as heavy milking machines as the men.” That didn't seem unfair to him.

Majority Leader Les AuCoin, a Democrat from Forest Grove just south of Portland, was the first man to speak in favor:

[T]he question before us is simply this: Do we have the will to guarantee the full rights of citizenship to both men and women? ... In ratifying this amendment, we are not saying that one role in life is superior or inferior to another. Instead we are insuring that each individual has the full opportunity to be what he or she wants to be and then leaving it up to the person's ability, not the happenstance of one's sex, to determine if his or her aspirations will be met.

Yay, Les! He was followed by Repre-

sentative Roger Martin, a Republican from Lake Oswego, a suburb of Portland, also a proponent. Roger had drawn latrine duty, so I could sympathize with him. To fulfill his obligation, he'd informally surveyed four of the major oil companies that did business in Oregon. Did they plan to change the restrooms in their service stations should the ERA become a part of the Constitution? After he convinced them he was seri-



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ous, they replied that the service stations were there to serve the public, and that the public would continue to want separate facilities. However, Roger continued, one of the managers pointed out that some of the rural communities have only one restroom. “When I stopped to think about it,” Roger said, “I realized that he was right. This has been historical; usually they have not been differentiated between men and women, but between one-holers or two-holers.”

Good argument, Roger. I wished I’d thought of that.


The speeches were getting shorter as the noon hour approached. Representative Gordon Macpherson, a Republican from the Newport area, didn’t exactly endear himself to the women when he said he would join the “girls” in voting for the resolution, and that he had just heard “the two finest speeches made on the floor of this house by women.” But it was easy to forgive his faux pas in exchange for his vote.

Other legislators, all favoring the ERA, spoke in quick succession—Keith Skelton, Mary Rieke, Wally Priestley and Howard Willits, who pointed out that Oregon hadn’t even ratified the Fourteenth Amendment yet, and that we should do that and ratify the ERA, too.

Finally, Nancie Fadeley made her brief closing remarks. She spoke of the Oregon pioneer suffragist Abigail Scott Duniway, who was turned away when she tried to vote in 1870. Duniway then worked dili-

gently to get the vote for women and was finally successful in 1912, almost a decade before women nationally could vote.

The roll was called. The vote was fifty “Ayes,” nine “Nays,” with one person excused. An overwhelming victory.

While we had wanted to be the first state to ratify in 1973, two other western states beat us to the punch—Wyoming and South Dakota. Oregon was number twenty-five to ratify the ERA. We’d done it. There would be similar battles in other legislatures. In Oregon it was a sweet victory. 

The Authors

Betty Roberts served in the Oregon Legislature beginning in 1965. She was appointed in 1977 as Judge of the Oregon Court of Appeals and in 1981 to the Oregon Supreme Court. After her retirement from the Oregon Supreme Court in 1986, Betty Roberts began a new career in mediation and arbitration, and made international headlines in March 2004 when she performed the state’s first same-sex marriage ceremonies in Multnomah County.

Gail Wells is the author of several books, including *The Little Lucky: A Family Geography* and *The Tillamook: A Created Forest Comes of Age* (both OSU Press.) She is an independent writer and editor specializing in natural resource and historical topics.



The 2009 OLA Conference by the Numbers

by **Robert Hulshof-Schmidt**

Conference Chair, Program
Manager, Oregon State Library

The 2009 Conference was a great success. We had 485 people attend at least one full day; that's good attendance, especially given the current status of many travel and training budgets. The conference is OLA's primary means of generating operating revenue each year. The Board and Conference Committee set a budget goal of \$35,000 for this year. Despite the tight economy, we managed to bring in about \$34,500. Thanks for the success of the conference goes to everyone who participated in the conference and to an amazing conference committee. Their commitment and dedication made presenting this conference an absolute pleasure.

The data in this article are taken from online evaluations completed by conference attendees. 193 people completed surveys in the two weeks following the conference. That's a remarkable 40 percent response rate! Thanks to everyone who took the time to give your feedback. Future conference committees will use this information to shape the programs and schedules.

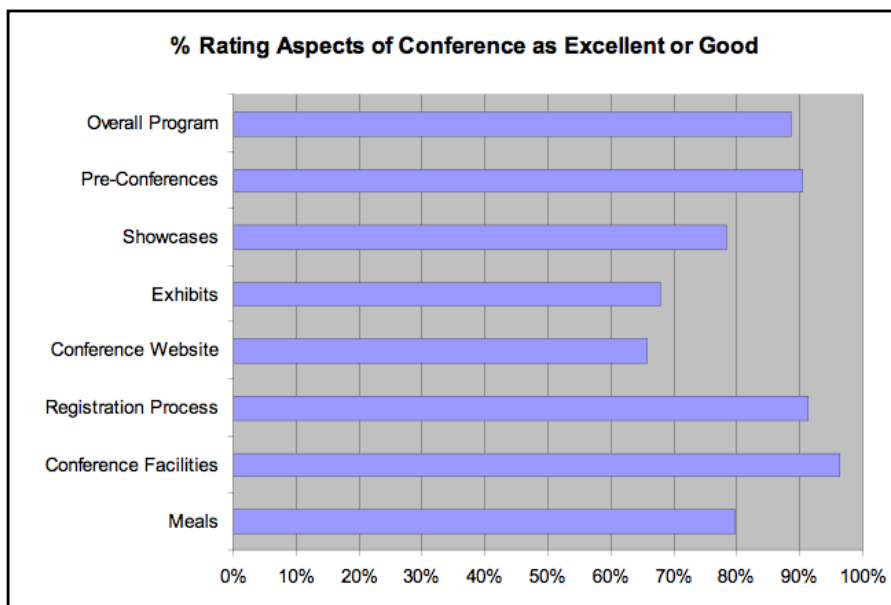
What did people say?

The first section of the survey asked people to rate eight aspects of the conference from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor). This chart indicates the percentage of respondents that rated each aspect either a 4 or a 5. (Including ratings of 3 (average), all eight aspects drew over 95 percent.)

High marks go to our partner in this conference, the Salem Conference Center. Comments included the convenience of the location, the layout of the facility, and the friendliness of the staff. Salem Conference Center staff persons are some of the finest facility partners I have worked with. While it is impossible to get temperature, menu, and room noise set to everyone's satisfaction, the overall response was very positive. There were a number of helpful suggestions about the need for more break food and earlier coffee, if possible.

The more challenging aspects of the conference were the Web site and the exhibits, which still received good ratings. For a variety of reasons, the final conference program was not available until very close to the conference. This was understandably frustrating and is something future conference committees can learn from. Most of the concerns about the exhibits focused on the number of exhibitors and the availability of staff at exhibitor booths. Both of these were driven down by tight budgets. I was really impressed by the commitment of exhibitors to attend our conference despite current constraints.

Overall, attendees were very pleased with the program. A number of individual sessions received many specific positive comments. Most people were pleased with the balance of programs for library staff from different disciplines and library types. Three themes arose in response to the program:



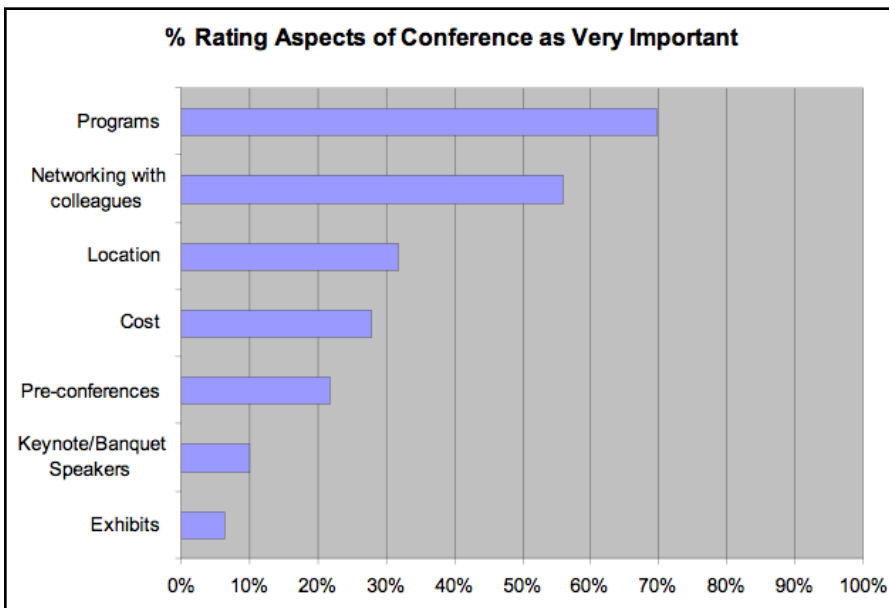
1. Many respondents suggested arranging topics in clusters or tracks. This was particularly of interest for people who could only attend one day of the conference. This is one of the great challenges of conference planning. Often when topics are clustered, attendees are frustrated that programs of interest compete in the same time slot. This is a difficult balance to strike, but something future conferences can strive to more fully achieve.
2. A significant number of respondents felt that the variable times for programs was unnecessary. Over 20 percent commented about programs being too long and breaks being too short. Program length is initially determined by the proposing group, but the conference committee can structure the program to encourage more consistency. There are some good suggestions in the report to the Board that will be used by the next conference committee.
3. The most consistent frustration was “not enough was presented in my specific area of interest.” A solution for this suggests itself: work with your OLA divisions, committees, and round tables to propose programs that interest you. The program committee does a great job of balancing the many proposals that come in, but we rely on OLA members to suggest topics and speakers. Given the highly participatory nature of OLA, more suggestions and presentations should be easy to achieve.

Why do people come?

The second section of the survey focused on why people attend the conference. Attendees were asked to rate seven factors from 3 (very important) to 1 (not important). The next chart shows how many people rated each aspect as very important.


Not surprisingly, the biggest draw is a strong set of programs. This matches the number of good suggestions we received for future programs and the strong (very positive) feedback that this year’s program received. While pre-conferences were rated much lower, those that are able to attend them provided equally strong feedback and appreciation in their comments.

Two related factors get mid-level responses: location and cost. While there were a few comments about the frequency of meeting in Salem, overall people like the facility and the relative convenience. Our conference is large enough that finding a good facility to accommodate us can be challenging. It’s clear that where the conference is held does matter, so siting is something for future conference committees to watch carefully. Although cost came in fourth, the number who rated it as very important was surprisingly low, especially this year. The OLA Board has worked hard



to keep registration costs low, and that seems to be reflected in this figure.

The other big draw should not come as a surprise. The opportunity to spend time with colleagues is a significant reason for attending the conference. In fact, most of the comments regarding location and cost were related to people's desire to see old friends, meet new colleagues, and discuss the business of their libraries with their peers.

At its heart, this is what OLA is about. As an all-volunteer organization, the variety of activities and programs that OLA offers is amazing. I've been involved with over a dozen state and regional library organizations, and I've never seen anything like the enthusiasm and collegiality of OLA. It's a pleasure to bring together a conference for such an engaged, interested, and participatory group. I encourage everyone to grab a hold of this spirit and find ways to be involved. Who knows, the next conference planning decision could be yours! 

Upcoming OLA Conference Information

2010

**OLA Awards Banquet
at Kells Irish Restaurant and Pub
in Portland, March 24, 2010**

No separate OLA Conference—The OLA Board encourages attendance at the **Public Library Association 2010 National Conference in Portland at the Oregon Convention Center March 23–27, 2010.**

More at http://www.placonference.org/general_information.cfm

Early Bird Rates
(deadline December 18)
PLA and Oregon Library
Association Members
\$195

Two OLA-sponsored preconferences at the Oregon Convention Center as part of the PLA National Conference:
a full day on graphic novels and libraries on March 23;
a ½ day on gaming in libraries on March 24.
Preconference registration rates to be announced.

2011

**OLA Conference at the
Salem Conference Center,
April 6–8, 2011**

2012

**OLA Conference at the River House in
Bend, April 25–27, 2012**



Two Sister Cities, One World:

An International Visitor to Corvallis and OLA

by **Maya Tarasova**
Librarian,
Zakarpatska Regional
Scientific Library

I came to Corvallis, Oregon in April, 2009 to visit the United States on behalf of the Corvallis-Uzhhorod Sister Cities Association. Mutual understanding between our countries—the United States of America and Ukraine—begins with mutual understanding of the citizens of cities like Corvallis and Uzhhorod. Being a librarian I left reassured that libraries play a very important role in American society and they are very similar to the libraries in Ukraine.

In my home country, as in the United States, we believe the library is a reliable shelter of democracy. In fact, it seems to be the one place where a visitor is accepted regardless of financial state, religion, or social position. In Ukraine a modern library is not just a warehouse of books but we should not undermine the value of a book as an essential source of information. Still, a modern library is a cultural and educational centre, a place for holding various programming, such as clubs, film previews, etc.

While exploring the experiences of American colleagues at the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, I discovered that American and Ukrainian librarians do believe in the following: libraries of the 21st century should change and exceed the constraints of the times. But in spite of the computerization and technological renewal of libraries the main focus of the library is still on the reader.

Learnings from an American Public Library

The work of libraries in the United States and Ukraine may be very similar, but there are some differences, and it was interesting to learn and share some of those. In the U.S. the public libraries often have three sections—services for children, youth, and adults. In Ukraine those patrons are served by separate libraries. They are located in dif-

ferent places and have their own directors and staff. But all of them are government owned and financed.

I think having one big library is much more convenient. First of all, it saves time for the parents who want to use the libraries at the same time as their kids. Also it is probably easier to finance and support one library instead of a few. This is a smart way—through children—to bring adults into the library. I noticed this happening at the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, when while bringing their babies, some of the parents became interested in the library and its services.

By the way, I should mention a form of social-cultural work that I observed in the public library in Corvallis. I was deeply surprised by the fact that early literacy for children starts with babies. I was present at one of these events, called “Story Time,” and it was adorable—especially to see fathers carrying their daughters and sons. That’s when you should start to inculcate the love of books in the heart of a child. In Ukraine, early reading programs start at a later age. In the meantime, some parents who did not emphasize early literacy may wonder 16 years later “how did it happen that my son or daughter does not like to read?”

In Corvallis, I was impressed with the fact that the Mayor, the city, and the public library work so close together. Mayor Charlie Tomlinson not only visits and supports the library, he is actually one of the users and biggest fans of the library. In general, the relationship between the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library and community is really close, and it is quite astonishing that the library has 250 volunteers, who do great work helping the library to serve the community better. Unfortunately volunteer work is not well



known and used in my country. So, we have something new to learn.

One more children's program that I think is important to mention—"R.E.A.D. Dogs." I took my host parents to participate in this event, because it sounded funny—reading to the dogs? It turns out that R.E.A.D. Dogs is a wonderful event. Children with some reading problems can pick up any book that he or she likes from the shelf and just read it to a dog. I need to mention here that the dogs are specially trained, so they are absolutely peaceful and harmless. Why do kids like to read to the dogs? Dogs won't criticize or correct like a teacher or another student; a dog will help develop self-esteem and just loves the kids (even if it has a different taste in literature).

Teen game nights were also new to me. Yes, I know that some librarians in the U.S., as well in Ukraine, would say that it is inappropriate—because the library should be used to educate and teach. But as one of the librarians told me, teens do learn at game nights. They learn how to work in teams, how to socialize, their reactions improve, and it is better for them to be in the library than to hang out somewhere on the street. Also, by the time the teen reaches the game room there is no way he or she can walk by those wonderful shelves full of books and movies and leave with empty hands.

Description of a Ukrainian Scientific Library

Let me tell you a bit about my library—which deserves and receives a lot of public attention in my city. Zakarpatska Regional Scientific Library is one of the leading cultural centers in our region. Thousands of research workers, students, and specialists of different subjects find necessary knowledge there, working until closing in different sections. Our library has outlived the hard

post-Soviet depression times. Compared to those days, the main library of the region is hardly recognizable—computers, modern equipment and furniture, building renovations, wireless Internet, etc. As the main library in the region it is a methodological and leading center for 25 district libraries and 500 village libraries.

The library consists of almost 500,000 titles in 18 languages, and is used by over 20,000 readers. That is just in the city of Uzhhorod, not including branch libraries. Besides the traditional functions of libraries—the organization and storage of documents and services for the readers—our library does work on different socio-cultural activities and also does scientific research work. Our library not only has educational and informational functions, it develops civic consciousness, increases social activity, promotes good taste, and creates a special cultural environment. For any writer, publisher, or talented person, the library provides space for conducting art or social events, free of charge. Thanks to such close cooperation with the public, the library is a center of education and culture in the region.

Besides those functions, our library publishes books on the scientific work which it explores. These publications include methodological-bibliographical manuals, publications about the best libraries of the region, promotional publications for the library, etc. Our most popular publication is the annual calendar. It is an orientation point for the community and has over 200 pages of social events, anniversaries and memorable dates. The foundation of the calendar consists of sound scientific research about remarkable figures of our region written by famous local scientists. The calendar is used not only in the libraries of our region, but also in local press, cultural and educational institutions.



My Job!

I am the head of the Window on America in the Zakarpatska Regional Library in the city of Uzhhorod, Ukraine. It was created with financial support from the U.S. Embassy. The mission of the Center is to promote mutual understanding between the United States and Ukraine, as well as to provide open access to information about American history, democratic traditions, contemporary politics, economics and culture. The Center has a unique collection of books and films about the U.S.

Various activities are held at the Center. Their aim is to promote communication between Ukrainians and Americans. The Center collaborates effectively with Peace Corps volunteers and other US citizens. There are many activities and events scheduled: presentations, discussions, meetings with interesting people, etc. Among those were the awareness campaign, "AIDS - to Know for Living," timed in accordance with World AIDS Day to fight against AIDS. Another program was, "We are Different—We are Equal," organized by Window on America and the children's rehabilitation center Path to Life. The program educated youth about problems of people with special needs in order to change a stereotyped relation with society. We also sponsored a concert of the American musical band, "The Maharimbas," who visited in September, 2008 from Corvallis. This event was completely aligned with the mission of the Window on America by promoting mutual understanding by way of music. Music, as well as other kinds of art, knows no boundaries.

Weekly meetings of the English-speaking club, which have taken place in the Center every Thursday for four years, assist English learners. Called "English-Speaking House" the club fosters communication in

English with interesting and unique meetings, free-wheeling discussions, linguistic practice etc. This club, in just a short time, became very popular. Here, in addition to knowledge people make friends, get advice, and share good times. In addition, the Center has helped some U.S. citizens find their roots in Ukraine. On Thursdays at the Center, it is difficult to find an empty space! All of these events occur regularly and are promoted by means of mass media (newspapers, television, and radio). Center services are free for people of all ages and social status. To use the services of the center a person must have a library user ID.

A Visit to the OLA Conference

I was taken to the Oregon Library Association conference by Beverly Smith, President of the Corvallis-Uzhhorod Sister Cities Association (and retired from Corvallis-Benton County Public Library). I am a member of the Ukrainian Library Association and have attended international and regional conferences. So I can honestly say that the 2009 OLA Annual Conference was very well organized and interesting. What makes me happy as a librarian is that the main interests of the library professionals are the same in both countries. For example I attended the session: "Library YouTubing: Making Library Videos" because this subject is very popular now among librarians in Ukraine. Making a YouTube video is one more chance to reach potential users, and show them that your library is up-to-date with new technologies. (Editor's note: see Maya's YouTube video of her Corvallis visit at <http://tinyurl.com/MayaYouTube>)

The Value of Sister Libraries

My trip was very interesting, busy, and useful for my work—as I will provide better information about the United States and





Maya Tarasova, Beverly Smith, and Mary Ginnane at the 2009 OLA Conference.

be a better library professional. I can use the experience of American librarians each day and share it with my colleagues. I hope the cooperation between the sister cities of Corvallis and Uzhhorod will continue with our sister libraries of Corvallis-Benton County Public Library and Zakarpatska Regional Scientific Library. 🌿



Reflections on “The World of Autism” in the World of Libraries

by **Kim Marsh Read**
Graduate student in the School
of Library and Information
Management program at
Emporia State University;
library staff member at Oregon
College of Oriental Medicine

On Thursday morning of the 2009 OLA Annual Conference, attendees at “The World of Autism” session received a crash course in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and its implications for the library. As an observer at the session, I gained an understanding of how ASD affects individuals and what this might look like in the library. I walked away with notes full of ideas for how to make the library a more comfortable place for ASD patrons. The presentations also stirred a research curiosity in me; I wanted to know more about library services geared towards autistic patrons. This article shares the presentations from the conference session along with some outside resources and articles. I hope they are as informative and inspiring to you as they were to me.

“The World of Autism” session featured presentations by Judith Belk Ph.D., Speech-Language Pathologist with the Center for Communication and Learning Skills who presented “What Librarians Need to Know About Interacting with Persons Who Have Autism;” Sharron Donnelly, Occupational Therapist with Advanced Pediatric Therapies who discussed “The Misunderstood Child: Understanding and Treating the Child with Sensory Processing Dysfunction in the Library Setting;” and Stacy Cayce, Chapter Representative and Board Member for the Autism Society of Oregon and parent to a six year old with ASD who gave an “Overview on Autism.” The presentations focused on children with ASD, although adults with ASD often have similar library issues. PowerPoint slides of the presentations can be found at <http://www.nwcentral.org>.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism is a spectrum disorder. It affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a term encompassing classic Autism, Asperger’s

Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder:

- Insistence on sameness; resistance to change
- Difficulty in expressing needs, using gestures or pointing instead of words
- Repeating words or phrases in place of normal, responsive language
- Laughing (and/or crying) for no apparent reason showing distress for reasons not apparent to others
- Preference to being alone; aloof manner
- Tantrums
- Difficulty in mixing with others
- Not wanting to cuddle or be cuddled
- Little or no eye contact
- Unresponsive to normal teaching methods
- Sustained odd play
- Spinning objects
- Obsessive attachment to objects
- Apparent over-sensitivity or under-sensitivity to pain
- No real fears of danger
- Noticeable physical over-activity or extreme under-activity
- Uneven gross/fine motor skills
- Non responsive to verbal cues; acts as if deaf, although hearing tests in normal range.

provided by Stacy Cayce

Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Rett Syndrome, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. Symptoms range from mild to severe within each of these five subcategories.

Autistic patrons in the library may be more common than previously thought.



According to a 2007 Centers for Disease Control report, the autism incidence rate is currently one in 150. It is believed to have both genetic and environmental causal factors. Symptoms emerge somewhere between birth and age two and a half, and ASD in boys is more prevalent than in girls by a ratio of four to one.

Language, Social Skills, and Sensory Processing

ASD generally impacts individuals in three areas: language, social skills, and sensory processing. According to Belk, ASD may cause difficulties with communication and speech. Autistic patrons may be non-verbal, may be unable to express their needs, or may exchange gestures for oral communication. Conversely, some individuals with ASD talk at length, use extensive vocabulary, and have difficulty with social cues signaling the end of conversations. ASD individuals think literally, so idiomatic expressions such as “Knock it off” and metaphors can be problematic. Some exhibit echolalia, repeating certain words or phrases they have heard previously. Making eye contact can also be challenging.

Individuals with ASD exhibit a range of social behaviors as well. They may find it difficult to interact with others and may avoid contact with librarians and other patrons. Children with ASD may prefer to play side-by-side instead of with other children (Farmer and Sykes 2008, 25). Those autistic patrons who do seek interaction may find it difficult to consider the perspective of others, take feedback or suggestions, infer how others feel, identify conflict, or understand when a conflict has been resolved.

Donnelly explained that other behavioral challenges that accompany ASD are due to sensory processing issues. The central nervous system in most individu-

als is able to take in sensory information and produce an adaptive response, an ability called sensory integration. A common problem for ASD kids is sensory defensiveness, which causes sensitivities to sounds, sights, movements, or smells. With sensory processing dysfunction, an overload of sensations can produce what Donnelly referred to as “a traffic jam in the brain.” Instead of an adaptive response, a person with autism may display emotional outbursts, distractibility, or other responses listed.

Clinical Implications of Sensory Processing Dysfunction:

- Can't sit still
- Fidgety
- Stands or moves often
- Seeks movement
- Refuses movement
- Difficulty sitting squarely in chair: slips out, wraps feet
- Hold pencil too lightly/tightly
- Crash into objects/people in the environment
- Not able to do things without looking
- Stands up to work/learn
- Lays on floor or table
- Generally inactive
- Frequent hitting, hugging, pushing, squeezing, pinching
- Poor tactile discrimination
- Tactile defensiveness
- Hyperactivity
- Oral defensiveness
- Attention deficits
- Articulation difficulties
- Decreased visual perception

provided by Sharron Donnelly



In her presentation, Donnelly stated, “All behavior has meaning,” which is a compelling way to stress that behavior that may seem out of place is often a way for an ASD individual to meet his or her sensory needs.

Practical Suggestions: Library Environment

Just the idea of going to the library can cause anxiety for individuals with ASD. To remedy this, two libraries in New Jersey created a customizable book template that uses a picture book format to introduce ASD individuals to their local library (see resources section below). Belk also mentioned the idea of a booklet of pictures or a chart of sequential library procedures that a patron could carry with them in the library.

Libraries can also focus on making the library a more welcoming place for ASD patrons once they are there. Large rooms can be distracting and overwhelming. Distractions include noise, fragrances, and unexpected interruptions. Libraries can consider creating small cozy spaces, removed from noisy areas. Small quiet spaces that can be reserved for a set amount of time are even better. Natural lighting is preferred over fluorescent lighting, which some autistic individuals are sensitive to (Farmer and Sykes 2008, 26).

According to Donnelly, certain objects in the library can help autistic children navigate their sensory needs. Beanbag chairs and rocking chairs help produce slow, rhythmical movement, which is calming. Having something in the hands or in the mouth can calm and focus a child. “Brain toys” such as koosh balls, pipe cleaners, and hair elastics can create acceptable ways to fidget. Oral aides include water bottles, drinking through a straw, gum, and chewy necklaces.

Practical Suggestions: Programming

Library programs geared specifically for autistic children have the potential to improve communication, social, and cognitive skills. Research shows that children with ASD “benefit from oral reading, storytimes, multimedia, song, and literacy efforts” (Akin and MacKinney 2004, 35). Routine and predictability are the keys to a successful storytime or other library programs for ASD children.

Stacy Cayce offered suggestions for storytimes geared towards autistic children: storytimes held during less busy library times, shorter storytimes than normal, clearly defined activities, commitment to a defined schedule, and the use of fidget toys and visual cues. Visual cues for storytime would display what and when activities would take place. Being accepting of children who cannot make eye contact and being flexible with personal space issues were other qualities that would be ideal in library staff when presenting to ASD children. Another idea for library programs is to utilize music with a regular rhythm and beat to facilitate movement and help with transitions, an idea presented by Donnelly.


Donnelly also recommended the use of social stories. Social stories are those that teach a social or behavioral skill with visuals. Belk suggested the use of social stories regarding library behavior and policies. In general, pictures and visuals are recommended over wordiness.

In the article “Autism, Literacy, and Libraries,” authors Lynn Akin and Donna MacKinney provide additional ideas for library programs for ASD children. Books with repetitive language, picture dictionaries, and word books are recommended, as well as songs, circle time, drawing, and singing. Again, repetition and routine are key.



Practical Suggestions: Computers

The use of multimedia is another recommendation for libraries wanting to reach out to ASD children. Computers in particular are enjoyed by many autistic patrons. Using a computer is a non-social, repetitive, predictable, and kinesthetic experience. It does not require social interaction or verbal communication, and can improve both attention span and creative expression (Farmer and Sykes 2008, 26). Computers may even relax and comfort ASD children, as research shows that ASD children use less self-stimulating behaviors when at the computer (Akin and Mackinney 2004, 37).

Knowing what to expect in the library makes ASD patrons more comfortable and knowledge of ASD makes library staff more comfortable. The first step toward opening the library world to the autistic patron is educating library staff to recognize, understand, and accommodate the challenges of ASD. When noticing an ASD patron who is facing sensory overload, for example, Cayce recommends simply noting the behavior to the individual or parent, and asking if there is anything you can do to help. This in itself shows a commitment to accepting ASD patrons in the library, and being open to helping make their experience a positive one. 

References

Akin, Lynn and Donna MacKinney. 2004. Autism, Literacy, and Libraries: The 3 Rs = Routine, Repetition, and Redundancy. *Children and Libraries* 2(2): 35–43.

Farmer, Lesley S.J. and Maureen Sykes. 2008. Library Services for Students with Autism. *California School Library Association Journal* 31(2): 25–27.

Recommended Resources

Playing, Laughing, and Learning with Children on the Autism Spectrum: A Practical Resource of Play Ideas for Parents and Carers by Julia Moor, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002

The Out-of-Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Processing Disorder, Revised Edition, by Carol Stock Kranowitz and Lucy Jane Miller, Perigee Trade Books, 2006

<http://www.nwcentral.org> (PowerPoint slides from “The World of Autism”)

<http://www.autismspeaks.org>

<http://www.autism-society.org>

<http://www.oregonautism.com>

<http://www.pdppro.com>
(brain toys and fidgets)

<http://www.thejointlibrary.org/autism/resources.htm> (customizable library introduction book, downloadable training video, and downloadable visual cues)

<http://www.cookieimag.com/homefront/tips/2009/03/autistic-partygoer> (written by a father of an autistic boy as a guide to understanding his son’s behavior at a birthday party)



One Preconference: Much Impact

by Heydi Smith
*Library Aide,
Stayton Public Library*

and

by Mary Ginnane
*Youth Services Manager,
Eugene Public Library*

Mary: What led to your employment at Stayton Public Library?

Heydi: I visited the Stayton Library quite often. When my husband and I learned that the city was building an addition onto the library, we wondered if they might need more staff with the larger space. I asked and they said they might once the remodel was done. I continued asking every week! I interviewed ... they called me up and here I am. For which I am eternally grateful, since I had no library experience, other than as a devoted patron.

Mary: Where had you been previously employed?

Heydi: I worked for an Elder Care business as a secretary. Before that I worked as a legal secretary for a divorce attorney.

Mary: What led to your attendance at the “Got Teens? Building Readers & Reaching Out” preconference?

Heydi: Since I am only a library aide, being allowed to go to any kind of meeting is astounding. I was asked if I’d want to go to the preconference regarding teens ... which through my own research I had already found out about and really wanted to attend. For me the OLA preconference was a dream come true. Getting the opportunity to attend the Got Teens? preconference was exciting because I knew I would gain more knowledge on how I could better serve our young adults.

Mary: Describe the space and services for teens at Stayton Public Library up to the point you attended the preconference.

Heydi: Our library is newly expanded and we now have a teen area. Oddly enough, teens are now venturing in! However, when

they get to the library, then what? I am currently learning about and starting teen programs at my library. I completely love my job and have really found a passion for working with teens. But love and passion does not make you knowledgeable.

Mary: What was it like going to the Salem Conference Center for your first OLA Conference?

Heydi: Since this was my first time at an OLA Conference I didn’t know what to expect and I was very nervous. When I got to the Center everything was so organized and I was able to tell right where I was supposed to go to sign in. Then I walked around and looked for the appropriate room. All the titles for the other sessions I passed by looked so tempting, like “Listen Up: Audio Books in the Library.” The “Basic Book Repair for Libraries” is also an interesting topic since I deal with many well-loved books that have to be reassembled, so to speak. The one that especially caught my eye, though, was “Introduction to Music Cataloging.” I consoled myself about not being able to go to these programs with the fact that OLA has a conference every year and I can’t learn everything in one day, even though I greatly want to.

Mary: Tell me some ideas from the teen preconference that you are trying to apply at your library.

Heydi: One major realization was how and what teen boys are reading and how to make book lists they will actually pick up. Without realizing it, they are reading all the time through world record accounts, video games, magazines, comics and sports stats. If we make a list of general teen books they probably won’t even look at it. But if we make a list consisting of things they are already reading then it will be a natural progression



for them to want more. Basically: we should have a wide variety of books on our lists to attract boys—subjects like hunting, math puzzles, sports, and Guinness record books. Another thing about boys is that they like games in which they are the character. In a story they only get to relate to the character. Lastly, I appreciated this key phrase, “We should try to harness the potential energy, not cage or tame it.” This phrase in particular has educated me more than anything on how to handle our young adults who act rowdy in the library.

Mary: Are there other ideas from the preconference you are trying?




Teen area, Stayton Public Library

Heydi: I learned a lot about programming for teens and what they are looking for in a program: a chance to show expertise, hang out with friends, and a neutral place to try new things. This has helped me a great deal in planning our first teen summer program. Also, teen councils were discussed, mostly their importance, not only in getting feedback from teens but giving them a chance to see that we care about their opinion. Since then I have started a teen advisory board (TAB). It truly has changed the way I look at teen programming. It is so nice to be able to ask teens straight out what they want and how would they like it presented and even nicer that they actually respond with insightful and extremely helpful comments. The decorations in the picture of the teen area were suggested by our TAB and wow, do they make a difference! We are also starting a graphic novel collection, per their request.

Mary: What else impressed you?

Heydi: It was great knowing that the power point presentations would be online to access later. I think this is definitely the way to go. I was really able to listen intently to the advice and experiences the speakers had. Not having to copy what was on the slides meant that when they said something that gave me an idea for future use I could take time to write it down instead of pushing it out of my mind trying to concentrate on getting every word down.

Lunch was great. I'm not talking about the food either. I mean the Association. All of the people that sat at my table were in the Got Teens? session, so they work with teens. With that knowledge I knew that now was my chance to get my questions answered. I had been told that many people don't like sharing their "secrets" to success but I have not found that to be the case among children's and teen librarians. 



One State, Two Stories:

Getting Here with Magic and Detours

**by Margaret
Harmon-Myers**
Reference Assistant,
Eugene Public Library

and

**by Bonnie Carolee
Hirsch**
Adult Services Librarian,
Eugene Public Library

Margaret:

It was magic that first drew me to working in libraries.

As I was growing up, the public library loomed large in my life. Whenever my family moved to a new place the first thing my mother did was locate the library and get us library cards. Every Saturday we went to the library, staggering under armfuls of books to return, eager to check out new ones. In some of the places where we lived the librarians were stern arbiters of what we kids were allowed to check out, even preventing us from entering the adult section alone. With Mom in tow we swarmed nonfiction: books on sewing and cooking for Carol, art for Janet, electronics and music for John, and science and history for me. Mom would add them to hers, which meant she couldn't take as many as she wanted. These same libraries had limits on the number of books you could check out at one time. We four kids would divvy up our children's fiction between us so no one exceeded the limit.

The library itself meant wonder and knowledge—it was a magical place to me. The people who staffed it were peripheral and without my mother's support would have limited my access to what seemed like an endless supply of information. How ironic, then, that I came to work in libraries!

Carolee:

At Boise's Carnegie library you had to be in junior high before you could use the adult section. Braving those stairs the first time was so scary, until I discovered the historical novels. They were the magic to take me to more intriguing times and places. During summer vacations my main exercise was walking to the library for another armload of escapes. But as a teen I would have shuddered at the thought of being a librarian. Be like that Miss M . . . ? No way was I going down that road!

So it was a total shock ten years later to read, "If you teach children how to use a library, the children can teach themselves anything else they need or want to know," and to realize, "Whoeee! I want to be a school librarian!"

Boise State offered only a year of undergraduate classes for school librarians. Near the end of the year I figured the next step would be a couple of education classes beyond my existing BA. Nope. They required yet another three years to earn a teaching certificate. But I had to work, and Albertson's headquarters would hire me right then to set up a training library. Business trumped idealism.

Margaret:

I didn't dream of being a librarian. My mother's wish for me was a university education and a career and she leaned toward journalism or teaching. I wanted science or English, but those weren't considered good ways to make a living and I entered University of Oregon majoring in journalism. The professors soon discouraged me because that was a "man's" profession, so teaching it was!

Working part time at the School of Librarianship it occurred to me for the first time that one could make a career as a librarian, but graduate school wasn't practical or affordable at that time. I later transferred to the University of Portland, where I got an excellent education while working part time at the Wilson W. Clark Memorial Library, the Multnomah County Library, and the Indochinese Cultural and Service Center. I graduated in two and half years with my B.A. in Education, minor in English, and plunged headlong into teaching in inner city Portland. By the time I was teaching Bilingual-Migrant education in central California, my focus had become certification in Second Language Acquisition followed by graduate school in Special Education-Learning Handi-



capped. Librarianship was long forgotten.

Carolee:

After a few years at Albertson’s and a detour into business classes, I worked at a medical library. Helping a doctor research the solution to an elderly veteran’s illness seemed somehow more vital than trying to convince a grocery manager that the “Information Center” might provide something relevant to employee training. The medical librarian was a wonderful mentor, who inspired me to consider the Masters of Library Science program at the University of Oregon.

That’s just when the UO program shut down. And, not coincidentally, I got pregnant. I turned my main focus to becoming a published poet and a creative mom—rewarding and magical detours.

While my kids were small, I worked part-time temporary jobs at a historical library, an engineering library, two public libraries, and a preschool where I loved reading to the children and teaching crafts. One wonderful year another woman and I produced the summer reading program for a small public library. I loved helping children discover the world and develop creativity. Sadly, I learned that I have a low tolerance for the high pitched voices and energy of children. Some days I channeled Miss M ... !

When my youngest started school we moved to Eugene, and once again it was essential that I work full time. I landed in Technical Services at Eugene Public Library, and turned my focus back toward a library career. I joined OLA and at my first conference, signed the petition to start the brand



Margaret Harmon-Myers and Bonnie Carolee Hirsch, Eugene Public Library

new Support Staff Round Table (soon to grow to a full division). Those were magical days as we gathered to define ourselves as library professionals. Going away for graduate school was still out of the question.

Margaret:

After nine and a half years in the classroom I left teaching and eventually moved back to Klamath Falls where I’d gone to high school and where my dad and sister still lived. I did substitute teaching until school finished then went to work in the advertising department of the local daily newspaper. When an opening at the Klamath County Library was advertised, I jumped at it and in December 1995 went to work as a Library Assistant in the Children’s Department.

I was full time and the other person in the department part time. We were it, responsible for running services and



programs and all aspects of collection development including weeding, acquisitions, and budget, for kindergarten through high school. I joined the Oregon Library Association and became immersed in the life of the public library. From establishing a separate Teen collection and space to writing a collection development policy for my department to planning the Summer Reading Program; from learning Library of Congress subject headings to applying for Ready to Read grants to doing preschool storytimes, there was never a dull moment. I lobbied for a budget for the Young Adult collection (there was none) and was thrilled with the \$1,000 I received! The next year it grew to \$2,000.

With tenuous funding and the shadow of layoffs, our library with its eight branches was struggling. One by one the MLS librarians, including two graduates of the Emporia distance learning program, who had been such good models for us, left for better jobs. My counterpart in Adult Services and I essentially became librarians. The whole staff, from the director to circulation and the library board worked tirelessly to pass a library service district levy: staffing phone trees, walking neighborhoods, and knocking on doors. It paid off and the library now had stable funding outside the county's general fund.

Carolee:

At Eugene Public Library, one had to have an MLS to directly provide reference service. Working in Tech Services allowed some schedule flexibility for parenthood, but I missed reference work. In the early 1990's the University of Arizona proposed a distance learning MLS program, with the requirement that the State Library commit a certain amount of resources toward the project. At the OLA conference that year, the Support

Staff Division gathered about 100 signatures on a petition asking the State Library for that commitment. The State Library researched distance learning programs, and encouraged another pioneering program offered by Emporia State University. Over eighty of us gathered for the first class in 1994.


Margaret:

Moving to Springfield in 2001 brought me to employment at the Eugene Public Library, first with Acquisitions in the Technical Services Department, then moving into Adult Reference Services where I am today. It is here that I began to take a more active role in OLA's Support Staff Division and I can say that after more than thirteen years of working full-time in public libraries, my appreciation and respect for my fellow support staffers continues to grow. We are such a varied group and we bring so many gifts, such strength and dedication and hard work, to the libraries and patrons we serve. We are the backbone of the library.

Carolee:

In 1997, just 25 years after deciding to be a librarian, I graduated with an MLS. Whoee! I'm a librarian! I'm an adult services librarian, not a school librarian. The lines between support staff and librarian roles are blurring, as we strive to use everyone's knowledge and abilities. Changes make for an exciting ride. Sometimes I still ask patrons to talk more quietly. And I tell parents how vital it is for them to teach their children to use the library.

Margaret:

Thank goodness today's libraries are a far cry from those of my youth, and those of us who work in them are committed to making everything accessible for all and to keeping the magic alive. 



Readers, Readers Everywhere

by **Lauren Kessler**

(Permission granted by the author to reprint the "On Craft" column of the Spring, 2009 online issue of *Etude: New Voices in Literary Nonfiction*, University of Oregon, <http://etude.uoregon.edu>)

With all the talk about how no one reads anymore and how the book is dead—I've gnashed teeth, wrung hands and written about this myself—I'd like to report back from the hinterlands that it ain't so. To paraphrase Mark Twain: The news of the death of literature has been greatly exaggerated. We writers may not have to abandon our craft and rush out to get honest employment—or take on PR clients.

What is the source of my wild optimism? It's called Oregon Reads, a statewide program that took place in nearly every public library and in every county in my home state of Oregon during our sesqui-centennial celebration (that's 150 years). Masterminded by those mild-mannered defenders of the faith, those bi-focaled bastions of literacy, the state's librarians, the program was amazingly, exuberantly, vibrantly successful.

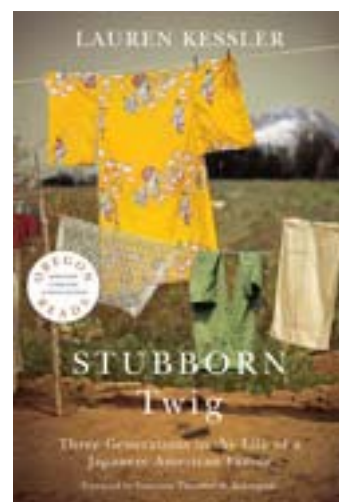
The librarians chose three books—a work of narrative nonfiction, a young adult novel and a children's book—wrote grants, beat the bushes and otherwise raised funds to buy copies of these books. Libraries, through the work of their dedicated foundations, also raised funds. (Let's pause a moment here to marvel at the fact that people are using their time and energy to fundraise for literature—and that these efforts have actually been successful, especially in these trying economic times) The result was the purchase and distribution of thousands and thousands of these books, boxes of books, palettes of boxes, sent to major metropolitan libraries and tiny old Carnegie libraries, libraries in wealthy suburbs and out in cowboy country, in coastal retirement communities and in dying timber towns. Many of these libraries not only acquired and distributed these books but hosted a variety of public programs in their

communities. At these programs, which ran from January through April of this year, sometimes as many as 600 people gathered in an auditorium to listen to an author talk about her book.

I know. I was privileged—honored—to be the author of one of the three books chosen for Oregon Reads. The book, a work of narrative nonfiction, was *Stubborn Twig*, a story of the promise and peril of becoming "American," an immigrant story, an Oregon pioneer story, told through the lives of three generations of a single family. I spoke in eighteen venues, from community rooms in libraries to school auditoriums to converted movie theatres, and everywhere I went there was excitement.

Excitement.

Not just about the book everyone was reading but about stories, about the power of stories in our lives, about how stories can tell us who we are and who we were. And equal excitement about libraries and their essential place in the life of communities.



Cover of *Stubborn Twig*



From the OLA President

In appreciation for the work of the Oregon Reads Committee:

- June Knudson, Hood River County Library, Co-chair
- Sara Charlton, Tillamook County Library, Co-chair
- Leah Griffith, Newberg Public Library, Initiating Chair
- Linda Ueki Absher, Portland State University
- Katie Anderson, Oregon State Library, Oregon Center for the Book
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- Kimberly Willson-St. Clair, Portland State University

In grateful recognition of Oregon Reads donors and partners:

- James and Marion Miller Foundation
- Starseed Foundation
- Oregon Public Broadcasting
- Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center
- Oregon 150

I was—I continue to be—flabbergasted by the intensity of involvement, by readers I thought did not exist, by librarians who have not slackened their pace despite budget cuts and understaffing, by business-people who donated money, who in some towns I visited hosted me in their hotels (a shout out here to the amazing Geiser Grand Hotel in Baker City, Oregon).

At each of the public events, I was deluged with questions. People wanted to know why I wrote what I wrote, where I got my ideas, how I did my research, how I wrote. They were hungry to understand the life of a writer and the life of a book. They followed me out of the library. They e-mailed me the next day. And no, it wasn't creepy. It was wonderful.

And so I am back from the hinterlands, from Pendleton and Ashland, Lincoln City, Hood River and Bend—from those small cities and smaller towns that no one outside of Oregon even knows the name of—and I am, like the new immigrants I wrote about in *Stubborn Twig*, overblown with hope.

There are readers out there, plenty of them. 🌿

The Author

Lauren Kessler (www.laurenkessler.com) is the author of five works of narrative nonfiction, including the Oregon Library Association's Oregon Reads selection *Stubborn Twig* and, most recently, *Finding Life in the Land of Alzheimer's*, winner of both the Pacific Northwest and the Oregon Book Awards. She is the editor of *Etude* and directs the University of Oregon's program in Literary Nonfiction. See <http://thinhouse.net> for news of Lauren and family's energy independence project.



Lauren Kessler



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Vol./No.	Theme	Deadline	Pub. Date	Guest Editor
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Vol 15 • No 4 Winter 2009	<i>Across the Great Divide</i> (a special OLA/OASL joint issue)	October 15, 2009	December 15, 2009	<i>Robert Schroeder</i> & <i>Ruth Murray</i> Portland State University



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