



Rural Library Services Newsletter

Addressing trends, challenges & current issues facing rural libraries since 1989.

September / October 2007
Volume 18 Issue 5



Library Staff Life Philosophies

Time spent reading is never wasted.

What's the worst that can happen?

It is what it is.

Don't postpone joy.

It will all come out in the wash.

Most people are about as happy as they decide to be.

Is anybody dying?
NO? Then relax, it's not that important.

If it's free, it's for me.

"I am missing a formal religion, but I am not without a theology, and my theology is that kindness is a divinity in motion." — June Callwood

For more "Life Philosophies" see page six.

THE CRACKER BARREL



What's Wrong with "Library Quiet" Anyway?

There seems to be some sort of bru-ha-ha in our profession when anyone refers to librarians as "shushers" and libraries as "library quiet." Television commercials have used libraries for comparison as quiet, conservative, modest, sensible, etc. for years. Some in our profession seem to be insulted when compared to a bun-clad, sensible-shoe-wearing, shushing librarian. And, many have tried to dispel that image for years. "We are not quiet! You ought to be here when school lets out!" But all the arguments about "how WRONG they all are" are falling on deaf ears. Libraries and librarians have an image. Face it. It's true. It's based on fact. Joe Schallan (Phoenix) shared recently in the PUBLIB discussion list that we,

"are not hip and cool as we try to make out we are. I have long believed that any organization, to succeed, must play to its strengths and not attempt to be something it never was, nor ever will or can be. Guess what? Libraries and librarians will never be hip and cool. And it will always be laughable when we attempt to portray ourselves that way. Our great strength is precisely that we are NOT hip and cool. Think about it."

Well Joe, I am thinking about it, and have thought about it for quite a few years. Look around at the next professional conference you attend. What do you see? Uh oh, "they're right"... we do wear glasses, buns, conservative suits and sensible shoes. Our profession might be screaming for a make-over, but why? What's wrong with sustaining a long-earned reputation of being institutions of serious study and knowledge? What's wrong with being conservative and encouraging some level of quiet in our libraries?

Continued on page two

The Cracker Barrel

Continued from page one

The image of the library is one that has been built on — in many cases — a century or more of reality.

Our profession still tends to attract people who are a bit more conservative in nature. Rural libraries especially tend to represent towns and villages with traditional family ideals and values. We know our patrons. We see them on the street. They see us and sheepishly admit they have overdue books (as if we know what materials everyone has checked out). Many in rural communities have lived there their entire life. They remember visiting the library of their youth. Their parents remember visiting the library of their youth. And, that library was quiet. That library probably had a stern librarian who could fill a young person with fear with a single stare. That library had a certain “smell”. Do you remember as a child visiting older Carnegie libraries that many times housed the children’s collection in the basement?



No matter what the environment looked-smelled like back then... or now... the library is still a culturally and informational important institution. What’s wrong with projecting an image of tradition? What’s wrong with projecting an image of expectations (quiet) and professionalism? What’s wrong with projecting an image that has garnered respect throughout the years?

We can change with the times and try to be trendy, but no matter what you call us, we’re still libraries staffed by whom the public perceives as librarians. I don’t want my library to be called an “information center”. I want our library to be called library. Simple as that. Be proud of our heritage, our stereotypes, our history, our image. Stand tall and say “I work at the library” with pride and enthusiasm. When you allow the passion you have for your job shine through, the true image of the library will be exposed. What do you think? Let me know. — SP

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Volume 18 Issue 5 September / October 2007

ISSN: 1520-8761

Rural Library Services Newsletter

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Subscription Information 2007 rates:

Yearly cost for single subscription: \$30.00

Multiple subscriptions:

2-10 copies to the same address: \$25.00 each

11-25 copies to the same address: \$22.50 each

26 or more copies to the same address: \$20.00 each

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Rural Library Services Newsletter

Paulding County Carnegie Library

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Focus on Trustees

David Miller

State Library of
Ohio Board Member



David Miller has been named to the National Advocacy Honor Roll of the American Library Association and the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates. He is past president of the State Library of Ohio Board, the Ohio Library Trustees Association and the Wood County District Public Library Board. Miller is editor of the Sentinel-Tribune newspaper in Bowling Green, Ohio. Comments on columns or suggestions for future columns may be sent to him at: dcmiller@wcnnet.org or by calling (419) 352-4611.

Getting the People to Read

What can library trustees do about increasing the number of people who read books in their communities? One in four adults read no books at all in the past year, according to an Associated Press-Ipsos poll released on Aug. 21, 2007. The typical person claimed to have read four books in the past year. When a Gallup Poll in 2005 asked how many books people had at least started the typical answer was five. That was down from 10 in 1999, but close to the 1990 response of six.

In 2004, a National Endowment for the Arts report titled "Reading at Risk" found that only 57 percent of American adults had read a book in 2002, a 4 percent drop in a decade. Regardless of the surveys, the number of readers in this country are not very high — especially since many of those who said they read four books in the past year are probably exaggerating a bit.

So what can libraries do to make a positive difference in the reading patterns in their communities? Community Read programs are a great start. But I suspect that such programs often preach to the choir and do not, in fact, make a dent in the number of people who put a check in the "Haven't-read-a-book-in-the-past-year" column. The biggest exception I've seen to the "preaching to the choir" practice was when the library in Bowling Green, Ohio, selected "Marley and Me" for its Community Reads program. More than 600 people came out to hear the author, John Grogan, deliver a most entertaining talk. The secret to the success of that Community Reads event was being able to tap into a large population group: dog lovers. There are many such large population groups out there — the hard part is finding a book that can get them involved in a Community Reads event. Library trustees can play a big role in choosing those right books.

The book might lend itself to a community being big on local history — or sports. It could be a book written by a local author. It could be a book on global warming if the community identifies with any type of energy source. Regardless of the book chosen, the Community Reads events need to extend far beyond the library buildings. They should reach into places of employment, places of entertainment, senior centers or nursing homes or American Legion or VFW posts (especially if the book relates to the military or certain wars).

Many trustees are better suited than library staff at helping to identify groups for the library to reach out to with reading initiatives. It all boils down to the different circles of friends that trustees and library staff have in their communities. Chances are good that many library staff have large numbers of avid readers among their circles of friends. That is less likely to be the case among the circles of friends of at least some members of any library board. Those trustees then need to identify the best ways to market reading initiatives to those friends.

Library boards should brainstorm at least once a year about how to get more people to read. They should always be looking for events that might lend themselves to incorporate reading books as an extension of the activity. Trustees should also make personal commitments to try each month to convince one of their non-reading friends to read a book. If the friends spend a lot of time in their cars the trustee should encourage them to try listening to books on CD. If the friends have a particular hobby the trustee should let them know what new books the library has on those topics.

One new reader a month won't change the national percentages of people reading books. But if all library trustees in just the state of Ohio would do that it could translate into more than 15,000 new readers a year. Not a bad start. — DCM

Customer Service

25 Phrases to Calm Customers

1. I'm sorry for your inconvenience.
2. What can we do to make you happy?
3. No wonder you're feeling frustrated.
4. Please tell me what happened.
5. How can I help?
6. We value your business, so we want to resolve this quickly for you.
7. I appreciate what you're saying.
8. Yes.
9. Let me write this down so I've got it right.
10. I'm sure we can find a solution.
11. No problem.
12. Let's get this resolved.
13. I'd be glad to do that.
14. We'll make it right.
15. I'll find out for you right away.
16. Help me with some details so we can start fixing this.
17. I can see why you feel that way.
18. I agree.
19. What do you think is a fair way to settle this?
20. Let me see if I understand clearly.
21. I'm here to help you.
22. You're right.
23. I'll go work on that immediately.
24. I see what you mean.
25. Thanks for bringing this to our attention.



[Source: From Frowns to Smiles: Defusing the Angry Patron. Nancy Janney and Mannette Kessler. Toledo-Lucas County Public Library. Ohio Library Council Conferences 2006.]



Public Library Association 12th National Conference

Register online now:
<http://www.placonference.org>

The biennial National Conference is the premier event for the public libraries, drawing librarians, library support staff, trustees, Friends, and library vendors from across the country and around the world.

The PLA National Conference has a reputation for excellence and offers attendees more than a hundred high-quality educational programs, world-class speakers, a bustling exhibits hall, and countless networking opportunities and social events, making the conference one of the most popular and successful events for the public library world.

The 2008 conference promises more of the same in Minneapolis, a city that continually tops travel destination lists for its cutting-edge architecture, vibrant arts scene, award-winning theatre, tax-free shopping, and renowned restaurants.

Bookmark www.placonference.org and check back often for updated information on registration, conference programming, special events, travel, and insider tips on everything Minneapolis has to offer.

[Note: The editor of this newsletter will be presenting a program on developing websites for your public library. Hope to see you in Minneapolis!]



Limited the Number of Books Checked Out

What do you do when a patron wipes out every book your library has on a subject in one fell swoop? What if a teacher makes an assignment, then comes to the library, checks out all the books, leaving none for the students when they come to the library? This question was recently posed on the PUBLIB online discussion list. Consider:

We have a 3 book per subject limit and staff enforce it. Before they begin the checkout process they generally stack the books up and turn the spine toward them, scan the spine labels and if they see more than 3 in the same call number range they ask the patron to decide which books to checkout and which to return to the shelf.

I'm not uncomfortable with limits at all. It's unfair when other patrons come in for books on bears, insects, or their favorite author and find them ALL out. It's always useful to explain a change in the rules: "As of September 1 there will be a limit of 3 items [or books] per subject per borrower in order to ensure that all patrons have access to our collection."

With biographies (we shelve as 921s) we limit to 3 on any one person (not that we have 3 or more books on more than a very few people.)

"I hate the idea of policing. But I also think that if you don't limit the number of books on a subject you are, in fact, limiting access... to the person who gets there first. And if I were a patron who was never first, I would soon start looking elsewhere for assistance with my information needs." I once had a mom that came in and checked out all but one of the books that a child would need for science fair projects (about ten books). The next day we had kids looking all over the place looking for books for ideas and help. I bought more books but also wrote policy.

One library I worked at devised this plan for this specific issue. The caveat is it requires close work with your local school system. The school librarian contacts the local public library with an "Assignment Alert." This tells the librarians what topic is currently hot. The librarians make some of the books on that topic "reference" books so they will not check out and keep those books at their ready reference area. This counts down on what the customers can check out and also leaves some things in the library for those folks who do not get there first. Granted, the books cannot be checked out, but they are, at the least, available for use in the library. It worked well as long as the school librarians were in communication with the public librarians.

Even the large public libraries with which I am familiar limit the number of items one may check out. (I consider my library to be medium-sized.) Since the handout we give borrowers when they apply for a card tells the loan limit, and the limits are posted at public desks, our people know about them. It's the only fair way. I think if you explain to your borrower that limits are set so people have an equitable shot at obtaining what they need, they'll accept it.

In youth services, if there are no limits on the number of books you could take out on a certain subject, then some of the children might not have any resources since books might be hogged by one or two children.

Yes, and sometimes pupils/students do this deliberately, so they have all the resources and the other students don't get any, with the aim of possibly getting a higher grade on an assignment. I've seen it done on the college level.

The previous (large) system I worked for had a limit of 3 books per subject at branches, and no limits for the larger collection at the central library.

Instead of making an across the board limit, I choose to work with the teachers in the area to get pre-notification of big assignments and then would pull the books on those subjects and make limits temporarily. I'd hate to discourage an enthusiastic tyke who may want to read up on a subject. Now that I think about it, whether or not your library is in a shared catalog also should be a factor on whether or not to limit. All three of the libraries I've worked in were part of a shared catalog so if all our books were out on a subject a patron can request the items from other libraries and get it in a few days.

I work at a regional branch, and we don't enforce item limits by subject although they do at the smaller branches. However, this is a very competitive area, all the children are "gifted" (apparently there's something in the water) and this competition starts in kindergarten, or earlier, and is promulgated by the moms. I have heard mothers tell other mothers, (including myself!) "good luck finding a book on electricity... (or whatever subject a report is due on)...I've checked them all out!"

We had a bizarre assignment come through this year on "the digestive system of rats" I got very, very good at pointing them to appropriate database and online resources because we only had a few books on rats and those were gone early into the project.



[Source: Your brilliant colleagues via PUBLIB online discussion list. To search the PUBLIB archives visit this site: <http://lists.webjunction.org/wjlists/publib/>]

What's Your Life Philosophy?

When asked this question, colleagues on Publib discussion list were generous with their responses. Philosophies people adopt come from a variety of sources. Some are attributed, some are not. Enjoy.

- Live and let live.
- “It's not about how hard you can get hit--- it's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward.” — Rocky Balboa
- Some days just aren't worth chewing through the restraints.
- Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.
- There are few things in life that cannot be improved upon with the addition of hot sauce (or soy sauce or chocolate...)
- Hire good people. Train them well. Leave them alone to do their jobs. Say “thank you” often.
- Hope is not a plan.
- I'm done making someone a priority in my life who makes me an option in theirs.
- Be big, stay open, see the funny side.
- Liberal, Feminist — and damn proud of it!
- “An opportunity of a lifetime must be seized in the lifetime of the opportunity. “— Leonard Ravenhill (Evangelist)
- “What one man can imagine, another will achieve.” — Jules Verne
- Focus on what we can change or affect and don't worry about what we can't.
- Life is too short to work too much.
- Don't waste your time second-guessing yourself — there will be millions who will do it for you.
- “Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former.” - Albert Einstein
- “You see, I don't believe that libraries should be drab places where people sit in silence, and that's been the main reason for our policy of employing wild animals as librarians.” - Monty Python
- “Housework can't kill you, but why take a chance?” - Phyllis Diller”
- “More than at any time in history mankind faces a cross-roads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness, the other to total extinction. Let us pray that we will have the wisdom to choose correctly.” — Woody Allen
- “Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.” — John Lennon
- “Of course you can wear a hat. You just have to do it with attitude.”

- There ain't much to being a ballplayer, if you're a ballplayer.
- Guilt and shame are great motivators if pride doesn't work for you.
- In this world, Elwood, you must be oh so smart or oh so pleasant. Well, for years I was smart. I recommend pleasant.
- Chocolate fixes all ills. Chocolate sauce, chocolate candy, chocolate cake, chocolate éclairs, any form, any way it will cure what ails ya.
- Emily Dickinson had it wrong. Hope is not the thing with feathers; hope is the thing with chocolate.
- Approach every problem with the question, “Will this kill me?” If the answer is “no” it's not that big a problem. If the answer is “yes” you won't have to deal with the problem that long.
- “I've never quite believed that one chance is all I get. “- Anne Tyler
- “Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation. “- Walter Cronkite
- “You can't always get what you want, but if you try, sometimes you get what you need.” — Rolling Stones
- What goes around comes around.
- The world is built on baloney.
- Sometimes the truth is ugly, but it is still prettier than a lie.
- Making a living is not the same thing as making a life.
- “If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun.” - Katherine Hepburn
- “Everyone rises to their level of incompetence.” - Laurence J. Peter, The Peter Principle
- It will happen in the fullness of time.
- Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.
- As you sow so shall ye reap.
- Payback's a bitch.
- Treat others how they want to be treated.
- If at first you don't succeed, cover it with duct tape.
- “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”— Arthur Ashe
- “Do not do unto others as you would have done unto yourself. Their tastes may differ.” — George B. Shaw
- “When you know better, you do better. Now that you know better, keep the wisdom, lose the shame.” — Maya Angelou
- We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose...What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? — Romans 8:28, 31



Ask Gayle

"Ask Gayle" is a periodic column written by S. Gayle Hazelbaker, Director of the Tecumseh District Library (MI). Gayle has extensive experience in addressing management issues in the small public library. E-mail your queries confidentially to: sghazelbaker@tecumseh.lib.mi.us.

Dear Gayle,

Nepotism has reared its head at our rural library in Ohio. The Director is aware of the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Ethics Commission guidelines. In answer to my questioning nepotism the answer is always, "the board approved her". There is no record of this in the minutes.

The director hired her daughter in 1991 as a part-time student employee. Now the daughter is married and has 2 children who are in elementary school. Consequently she is wanting more hours. I gave a copy of the Ohio Ethics Commission guidelines and the article written by David Miller titled, "Just Say No To Nepotism" that was published in the March/April 2001 edition of the *Rural Library Services Newsletter* to the Director, the President of the Library Board and the daughter. I also asked that a nepotism policy be put in place for our library.

Immediately for the Director it was a "communication and trust issue" between director and staff. Staff was the problem. A staff meeting was called along with 3 board members to discuss "communication and trust issues". Needless to say staff came away sounding like little whiners. We were told at that meeting that there WILL be a grandfather clause written in the new policy.

I would appreciate any advice or suggestions on how to approach this issue. Thank You.

Signed,
Feelin' the heat in Ohio

Dear Feelin',

Yikes! You have been grappling with this problem a long time—over 15 years! By your letter I can see that you've done everything possible to rectify the situation. But it hasn't been changed to your satisfaction, and I'm sorry to say, I don't think it ever will. On the positive side, you've

succeeded in persuading the Board and Director that nepotism is not a good idea; they've agreed to write a policy. But the Director's daughter is not going away.

The way I see it, you have two options. First one is to leave the library and find another job. It may sound harsh, but the reality is that the daughter is going to stay. And the struggle to end her employment at the library is making your life miserable. Life is too short, my friend. You deserve to be content, if not happy, in your work life. You've done your best to change the situation and you've succeeded to a degree. While nepotism will no longer be a hiring option, the Director's daughter is going to stay.

If you don't want to quit your job, I suggest you take the second option available to you—suck it up. You need to make peace with the fact that the daughter is going to be there. Change the way you think about the situation, because that is your real power. You have control over your own actions and thoughts. With that control, I believe you can make your life better. Find something positive and focus on it. Maybe there is something you like about having the daughter on staff; focus on it. No matter how small the positive may be, just be sure you can genuinely feel good about it and then stay focused. Keep your thoughts in a positive vein and in time you might be happier at work.

Whatever you decide to do, I know you will choose the option that is right for you.

Best of luck,

Gayle

Association for Rural and Small Libraries to Collaborate with WebJunction

COLUMBUS, OHIO — The Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) is working with WebJunction to offer a vibrant new community on the Web to share best practices, research, ideas and discussion on issues most relevant to rural and small libraries. The partnership was announced Wednesday, September 27th, during the ARSL Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio.



The developing online community <www.webjunction.org/arsl> combines content from the former ARSL Web site with the training, materials and community participation of library staff at WebJunction. As part of the new community, ARSL contributed journals, newsletters and postings from its site to WebJunction, and will continue to provide regular webinars, updates and relevant advice to the community. "This partnership will help ARSL expand its reach, and help us in our efforts to become a national voice for rural and small libraries," said Ken Davenport, outgoing President of ARSL. "We're very excited about this opportunity."

The WebJunction Rural Library Sustainability Project, a three-year workshop schedule with more than 6,000 library staff members involved in 42 states, was recently completed and all of the resources, best practices and discussions that have been developed and shared will now be combined on the WebJunction site with ARSL materials. "WebJunction and ARSL working together is an important step forward in the effort to support and sustain a critical group of libraries," said Marilyn Mason, Executive Director of WebJunction. "We are thrilled that this partnership with ARSL will help WebJunction continue to address the specific needs of staff at rural and small libraries."

About WebJunction

WebJunction is the online community for library staff to meet to share ideas, solve problems and develop their professional skills in order to help ensure relevant, vibrant, sustainable libraries for every community. WebJunction is supported in part by OCLC, grants from the Institute for Museum and Library Services and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, partners in state library agencies and other library service organizations, and by the library community itself. Launched in 2002, WebJunction is based in Seattle, Washington. For more information: www.webjunction.org (<http://www.webjunction.org/>).

About the Association for Rural and Small Libraries

The mission of the Association for Rural and Small Libraries is to provide a network of people and materials to support rural and small library staff, volunteers, and trustees to integrate the library thoroughly with the life and work of the community it serves. ARSL is an outgrowth of and works collaboratively with the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship at Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

About OCLC

Founded in 1967 and headquartered in Dublin, Ohio, OCLC Online Computer Library Center is a non-profit library service and research organization that has provided computer-based cataloging, reference, resource sharing, eContent and preservation services to 60,000 libraries in 112 countries and territories. OCLC and its member libraries worldwide have created and maintain WorldCat, the world's richest online resource for finding library materials. For more information, visit www.oclc.org.

