

Letter To Libraries Online

An Electronic Newsletter from the Oregon State Library.....Volume 20, Issue 3, March 2010

Library Board News

STATE LIBRARY BOARD TO PURSUE STABLE FUNDING FOR NEWS SERVICE FOR THE BLIND

At their February 26th meeting the State Library Board voted to submit a proposal to Governor Kulongoski to produce a bill that would provide stable funding for the NEWSLINE news service for blind and print-disabled Oregonians. NEWSLINE has been offered in the state for the past three years with funding from the State Library, the Oregon Commission for the Blind, and the National Federation of the Blind, Oregon Chapter. About 800 Oregonians are signed up for the service which provides an audio version of three Oregon newspapers and many national newspapers. Users of NEWSLINE can listen to the papers over the telephone or download text files to use with Braille readers and other adaptive devices. The Board will ask the Governor to recommend to his successor that a bill be introduced in the 2011 Legislature to fund the NEWSLINE service using a fund at the Oregon Public Utilities Commission. At least seven other states fund their NEWSLINE service in this way. Stable funding from the Oregon PUC would replace donated funds that have been used to fund the service in the past three years. A similar plan to do this was included in SB 849 that was introduced in the 2009 Legislative session. The bill passed out of the Senate Business and Transportation Committee but died in the Ways and Means Committee at the end of the session.

RULE CHANGES FOR L-NET COST SHARING DISCUSSED BY THE BOARD

In other action at the February 26th State Library Board meeting, the Board directed the staff to proceed with a process to amend Oregon Administrative Rule 543-060-0070. This rule pertains to how larger public and academic library might, in the future, be asked to contribute to the cost of the L-net e-reference service. When the Board decided not to charge libraries for the cost of the statewide general reference database last fall, it meant that they would not be able to charge for L-net under the current rule. The amendment discussed by the Board on February 26th, would enable the Library to assess public libraries serving more than 20,000 population and academic libraries with an enrollment greater than 1,000 to support L-net. The staff will now file the amendment with the Secretary of State and a hearing on the change will be scheduled for the October 15th Board meeting. The Board also agreed to a request by Oregon State University Libraries to supplement their 2010 LSTA grant with \$14,999 of additional LSTA funding. This will allow OSU Libraries to fully implement a project that received

partial funding from the Oregon Heritage Commission to work with two historical societies in the state to digitize their heritage resources.

State Library News

ANCESTRY.COM ENTERS PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE LIBRARY

Ancestry.com, a major provider of genealogical information online, has just signed a letter of agreement with the Oregon State Library. Under the terms of the agreement, Ancestry will digitize and index documents of interest to their customers. The State Library will receive copies of the digital images for use as part of the documents collection. Images of state publications will be included in the [Oregon Documents Repository](#). The first priorities for scanning will include the bibliography card index taken from Salem newspapers throughout the early 20th century. Additional materials may be scanned as part of the Library's partnership with the [Willamette Valley Genealogical Society](#). Digitization work will begin this spring.

PUBLIC LIBRARIANS ARE CONNECTING MORE OREGONIANS WITH TALKING BOOKS

Talking Book and Braille Services (TBABS) has noticed that an increasing number of public librarians are certifying patron applications and we couldn't be more pleased. Helping your blind, low vision, and physically handicapped patrons sign up for Talking Books is just as easy as ever. Lots of librarians around the state are already familiar with giving out applications to eligible patrons. But don't forget that you can help your patron fill out the application and even serve as the certifying signature on the back page. Talking Book and Braille Services has always been a free service that provides audio books and players to print-disabled Oregonians. To view the TBABS registrations criteria and print applications on-demand, visit the [registration page](#). For posters, brochures, and pre-printed application materials, contact Elke Bruton at 503-378-5455.

Other Library News

OREGON PUBLIC LIBRARY USE SURGES IN 2009

An analysis of public library statistics recently completed by the Oregon State Library for fiscal year 2009 shows that the number of books and other library materials circulated from public libraries was up 7% from the prior year. Average annual growth in circulation in the five years prior to 2009 was only 2.6%. Fifty-three out of the 130 public libraries in the state reported double-digit increases in their circulation. Circulation totaled 55.8 million, an all-time record. Circulation has increased every year since 1973, and

circulation in 2009 was more than double the number reported just 16 years ago in 1994. Other public library statistics also showed strong growth in 2009. Gate count at libraries topped 25 million, an 8% increase, and 1.4 million Oregonians, mostly children, attended programs at a library, a 7% increase. The State Library data shows that most Oregon libraries had to increase their productivity to deal with the increase in their business. Per capita expenditures in libraries actually declined in 2009 from \$47.38 to \$46.74. One area where public libraries did not have to do more with less was in providing Internet access to the public. Thanks to a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, many Oregon libraries received matching funds for new computers. Overall the number of computers in Oregon libraries increased by 13% to 2,544. The computers were used nearly 5 million times in 2009.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY LIBRARY RECEIVES NATIONAL MEDAL FOR LIBRARY SERVICE AT DC CEREMONY

Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Susan Sher, First Lady Michelle Obama's chief of staff, presented the [2009 National Medal for Museum and Library Service](#) to Multnomah County Library, four other libraries and five museums at a Washington, D.C. ceremony on February 23, 2010. Every year, IMLS awards the National Medal to museums and libraries that have demonstrated a long-term commitment to public service through innovative programs and community partnerships. Multnomah County Library Director Vailey Oehlke was on hand to receive the award. In addition to the National Medal and a \$10,000 award, each 2009 Medal recipient will have the option of a three-day visit by StoryCorps, the nonprofit project that honors and celebrates American lives through recorded conversations.

LIBRARY SUPPORT STAFF CERTIFICATION PROGRAM WELCOMES CANDIDATE APPLICATIONS

The American Library Association's Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) is [accepting applications](#) from potential candidates interested in achieving the Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC). The LSSC Program is the first national, voluntary certification program for library support staff. Over forty Candidates have applied since the program opened January 25, 2010. The LSSC Program is open to any library support staff person with a high-school diploma or its equivalent and at least one year of full-time experience in a library with the last five years. Applicants do not have to be a member of ALA. The application fee is \$325 for ALA members and \$350 for non-ALA members. Candidates who choose to take an approved course may have to pay a fee set by the course provider. There is no cost for submitting portfolios. Candidates have four years to complete the program. More information about the LSSC Program is available [online](#). You can email questions to lssc@ala.org or call 312-280-2424.

P.S. (From the State Librarian)

About a decade ago I despaired over the sad state of Oregon library history. The secondary sources were very limited and most were very old. When I wrote about "[The Origins of the Oregon State Library](#)" for the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* five years ago, I had to rely mostly on articles and monographs published in the 1920's and 30's. There's nothing wrong with that, but it evidenced a depressing lack of contemporary interest in our history.

But recently the situation has changed. While it would be an overstatement to say there has been a flowering of interest in Oregon library history, there has certainly been a lot of solid work produced in recent years that now enables us to more easily learn about our beginnings.

Several Oregon public libraries have managed to persuade professional and amateur historians to research and publish their histories. Most notable is Tom McClintock's *The Best Gift: the History of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library* (2008). McClintock, retired from the history faculty at Oregon State University, spent years researching not only his local library's history but Oregon library history, beginning in the 19th century. He presents it all in his book, making an invaluable contemporary contribution.

But it doesn't take a professional historian to produce an outstanding library history. Kathie Olsen, who was a library board member for the Jefferson County Library, authored *Pages of the Past: A History of the Jefferson County Library* (2008). And Jon Littlefield, another library board member in Coos Bay collaborated with Ellen Thompson and Coos Bay Public Library Director Carol Ventgen to produce *History of the Public Library of Coos Bay, Oregon* (2009).

Two other librarians have made substantial contributions recently to documenting the history of librarianship in Oregon. We should all be very grateful for the work of Cheryl Gunselman, a manuscripts librarian at Washington State University, who has authored four very important articles, beginning in 2001, dealing with the history of the Multnomah County Library and the Oregon State Library. Her [most recent article](#) about the fascinating career of Cornelia Marvin Pierce, the first Oregon State Librarian, appeared in the Fall 2009 issue of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. Penny Hummel, who now directs the Canby Public Library after many years on the staff of Multnomah County Library, has contributed a [wonderfully-researched essay](#) on Mary Frances Isom, the first director of the Multnomah County Library, and, in my opinion, the most accomplished librarian in our history. I think Penny's essay should be required reading for all public librarians in Oregon.

Has your library's history been written yet? The books and articles I mention here prove it can be done. And it should be done, before some of it is lost. I encourage you to think about who in your library or your community might be happy to take the task on. – Jim Schepke

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