

[View this email in your browser](#)

**CONNECTIONS:** YOUR LINK TO THE  
State Library of Oregon



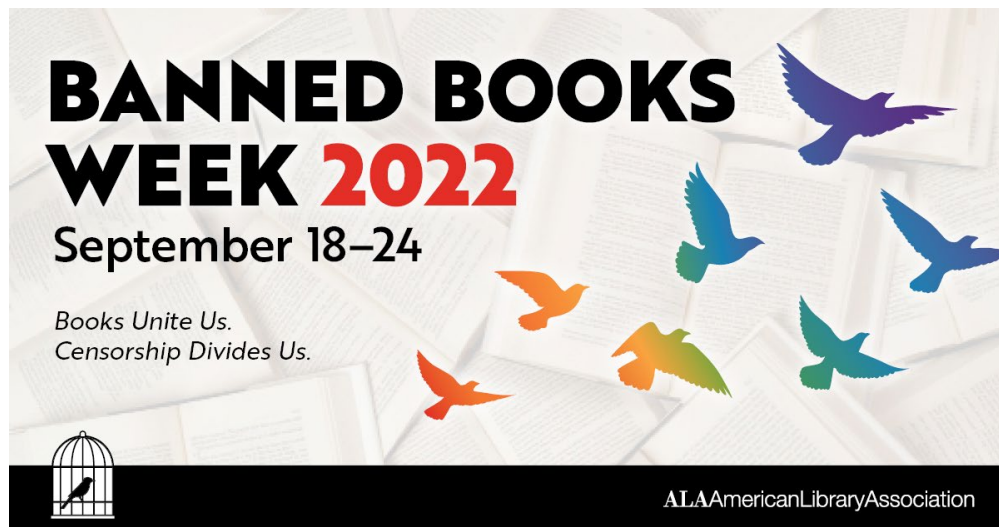
Volume 32, Issue 9 - September 2022

In this issue:

- [Celebrating the Freedom to Read](#)
- [Bridging the Digital Divide with Northstar Digital Literacy](#)
- [Book Plots Explained Poorly](#)
- [State Offices That Can Be of Help](#)
- [OrDoc of the Month](#)
- [Talking Book and Braille Library TRVIA TIME!](#)

AGENCY NEWS

## Celebrating the Freedom to Read



By Tamara Ottum, Federal Programs and Grants Consultant for Library Support and Development Division

[Banned Books Week](#) is September 18 – 24, 2022, and libraries are celebrating your freedom to read!

Typically held during the last week of September, Banned Books Week celebrates the [freedom to read](#) and spotlights current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools.

In celebration, teachers, librarians, and booksellers often host Banned Books Week displays, activities, discussions, and events. Many look to the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom for lists of materials challenged at libraries and schools across the country.

In Oregon, they can also use the State Library’s Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse (OIFC), a program that collects reports about challenges to library materials, services, and programs in all types of Oregon libraries and schools. The OIFC’s annual reports present a landscape of challenges in our state, and help support the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Oregon Library Association in their effort to educate and support the values of intellectual freedom as dictated in the Library Bill of Rights.

[Visit the OIFC](#) to learn about challenges to library materials, services, and programs in our state.

---

# Bridging the Digital Divide with Northstar Digital Literacy



By [Arlene Weible](#), Electronic Services Consultant for Library Support and Development Division

When policy makers talk about creating digital equity in this country, the focus is often on improving access to the internet. While providing an infrastructure for affordable broadband and getting devices into people's hands are both important to bridging the digital divide, true digital equity can only be achieved if individuals have the skills to use these tools to navigate in the digital world.

Library workers are on the front line of working with those who are without the skills needed to operate in our current digital environment. In 2020, State Library staff embarked on a strategic initiative to support Oregon libraries in workforce development activities and quickly found that one area of need was more tools to support job seekers to develop and improve their digital skills.

[Northstar Digital Literacy](#) was identified as a potentially useful tool to libraries, as it provided assessment tests, online learning modules, and a path for individuals to gain credentials that demonstrate skills to employers. Developed by Literacy Minnesota, the tool is based on [digital literacy standards](#) and provides a curriculum and tutorials to support both self-guided learning as well as informal and classroom instruction.

In June 2021, five libraries (Multnomah County Libraries and the libraries at Portland, Clackamas, Oregon Coast, and Umpqua Community Colleges) joined a pilot project to assess how useful Northstar Digital Literacy would be as a tool for assisting libraries with digital literacy activities. The libraries agreed to promote the tool and collect feedback from learners and instructors on its impact on teaching and learning. Community college libraries took a particular interest in Northstar, recognizing the need to provide basic digital skills training to students facing barriers due to remote learning.

Launching a new tool while still recovering from the disruptions of the pandemic proved to be a challenge for all pilot participants. As one library described, “The timing of implementing Northstar while coming back from remote operations was a challenge for our team. Every department, including our own, was working with limited bandwidth and lots of competing priorities managing details for getting buildings open, staff prepared, limited visits to our campuses (due to caution and COVID variants). It was really difficult to get new people to pay attention to new things.”

Libraries were also challenged to provide support to learners with limited digital literacy skills and/or English proficiency. Understanding that it is time consuming to teach digital skills remotely, even with a well-designed self-guided tool, is an important lesson from the first year of this pilot project.

Despite the challenges, these libraries are eager to continue the project for a second year. Once they get to know the tool, instructors are happy with Northstar. “I am a true believer in Northstar. It is a fantastic vehicle for students of all learning levels. [...] Students seem to really like this module. Most want to know if they can still use it after this term ends. Kudos to Northstar.”

With the addition of two participants, Blue Mountain and Central Oregon Community College, libraries participating in the second year of the pilot project will continue to promote Northstar with community groups as well as college instructors and support staff. Some participants are finding ways to incorporate Northstar into student support tools, such as this guide to provide basic digital skills instruction to support student success [Tech @ PCC](#). Pilot participants are also eager for the fall rollout of

Northstar assessments and learning modules in Spanish, which will make the tool even more accessible to many potential users.

Libraries are well positioned to be key players in closing the digital divide. We at the State Library are pleased to use federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding to continue offering Northstar to our pilot group, and we look forward to sharing a full assessment of its usefulness as a tool for libraries in closing the digital skills gap.

---

## Book Plots Explained Poorly



By Joel Henderson, Volunteer and Recording Studio Coordinator for Talking Books

Can you name the book if we explain the plot as “lonely rich guy stalks careless rich girl who likes his shirts...then he dies”? How about from the description, “An old woman seriously cannot deal with her breakup, so she refuses to put her cake in the

refrigerator...for years"? Props to you if you guessed *The Great Gatsby* and *Great Expectations*.

Crafting a brief, concise description of a book can be tough (just ask any cataloger). When it's done well, it's a work of art. When it's done, well, not that well, the results are often unintentionally hilarious.

Take, for example, the National Library Service's (NLS) Talking Book Topics annotations from 2012. In an effort to reduce the length of this publication that lists what new books have been added to their collection, NLS shorted all annotations to one line. Several are just one word. Some of our favorite gems mined from this experiment include:

"Teen hunts killer unicorns" (*Rampant*, by Diana Peterfreund)

- Say no more; we're in!

"Assassin finds love" (*Shameless*, by Karen Robards)

- Everyone deserves love, right?

"Assassin recognizes orphan" (*Intrigues*, by Mercedes Lackey)

- Raises soooooo many questions.

"Henry returns to France" (*A Troubled Peace*, by L.M. Elliott)

- Which Henry? When Henry? Why Henry?

"Kidnapped" (*Wolf Captured*, by Jane Lindskold)

- Past tense

"Kidnapping" (*Bound*, by Sin by Jenna Maclaine)

- Present participle

"Grace, now a wolf, is in danger" (*Forever*, by Maggie Stiefvater)

- Dang, hate it when that happens.

Lots of assassins and kidnappings, apparently. We're not sure these annotations are what Polonius had in mind when he said, "Brevity is the soul of wit."

Alternatively, a well-meaning user will, on occasion, try requesting a book by describing the plot. But their description will be "girl meets guy with secret, they fall in love, then something bad happens." Yes, OK, that could be *Twilight* or *Fifty Shades of Grey* or the Bible or a million other titles. Gonna need a little more to go on than that. "Oh yeah, the guy has dark hair." Of course he does.

Sometimes trying to identify a book by a poorly explained plot can feel like playing Pictionary. Like when another NLS network library staff person will reach out to our network listserv with a plot description, and suddenly we're right back on a game night couch yelling out wrong guesses like that's the goal. But there's always that one person who can look at three barely connected lines, or three barely coherent sentences, and BOOM they know the answer. It's amazing how many of those people choose to be librarians, isn't it?

What's your favorite [#ExplainABookBadly](#) example or moment? Feel free to share on [Twitter!](#)

---

## State Offices That Can Be of Help

By Jerry Curry, Reference Librarian for Government Services

Have you ever visited the library looking for information on a state agency that can help you with a particular issue?

Issue depending, there may very well be a specific state government office designed to assist Oregonians. We'd like to introduce you to a few of these offices and briefly

discuss their function and services. Two of these offices are so new, so this may be the first time you have heard of them.

1. Department of Consumer and Business Services, Division of Financial Regulation, [Office of the Ombudsman for Student Loan Borrowers](#).

Student loans have been in the news of late and Oregon has opened an office addressing the topic just this summer. The position of Student Loan Ombudsman helps people who have student loans seeking to educate and counsel borrowers who face complex repayment schedules. Additionally, this office ensures student loan providers remain in compliance with the state's licensing requirements and sanctions entities that fail to do so.

2. Department of Consumer and Business Services, [Ombuds Office for Oregon Workers](#).

This office serves as an independent advocate for injured workers by helping them understand their rights and responsibilities within the workers' compensation system as well as workplace safety and health. Additionally, this office investigates and attempts to resolve worker complaints regarding time loss and medical benefits, and it protects workers from workplace retaliation and discrimination.

3. Department of Consumer and Business Services, [Small Business Ombudsman](#).

This office serves as an independent advocate for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and the professional advisors who serve them. Their services include advising these entities regarding workers' compensation insurance and helping resolve disputes with insurers.

4. Department of Human Services, [Office of Foster Care Ombuds](#).

Working within the [Governor's Advocacy Office](#), this office serves as an independent resource to investigate complaints, concerns, or violations of rights for children in the



custody of Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS).

The [Governor's Advocacy Office](#) is an ombuds office that helps citizens with questions, concerns, or complaints related to all programs and services of ODHS.

5. Office of the [Long-Term Care Ombudsman](#).

The agency's ombudsman programs identify, investigate, and resolve complaints on behalf of residents in licensed care settings and residential home facilities.

Additionally, the Oregon Public Guardian program serves as a court-appointed, surrogate decision maker for adults incapable of making some or most decisions about themselves and their affairs and who have no one else to serve as a guardian or conservator.

6. Department of Revenue, [Office of the Taxpayer Advocate](#).

This office was created by the legislature in 2021 and began offering services this summer. This office provides the taxpayer with information regarding their rights when dealing with the Department of Revenue (DOR). It attempts to build public trust and assure taxpayers they are treated fairly and also investigates complaints against DOR employees.

The office has updated an important publication entitled, [Your Rights as an Oregon Taxpayer](#), and those rights spelled out in the Oregon "Taxpayer Bill of Rights" (ORS 305.860 – 305.900)

There is a wide range of offices in place to cover topics that affect all of us. We hope one of these offices can come in handy when you have a frustrating issue and are left wondering where to turn.

---

# OrDoc of the Month: Back to School



By Jey Wann, Oregon Document Depository and Acquisitions Coordinator for Government Services

September is back-to-school time. Students of all ages – kindergarten through college – are getting ready for a new chapter of their lives.

In the 1940s through the 1960s, the Associated Students of the University of Oregon published [The Ore-Nter](#)., and we have two editions in our collection. The booklet was intended to give new students a good overview of campus life, because “much more happens at Oregon than the University catalog would have one believe.” It includes short profiles of campus officials, organizations, and buildings. The information is useful and presented in a humorous style. For instance, “Over by McClure hall the people in the biochemistry shack manufacture odd fragrances....”

Of course, we're most interested in what the writers thought of the library. Here's how the 1944/1945 edition describes the librarians:

“As to the librarians—all of them are very helpful and friendly, tho not a little soberfaced—they're trained to be impartial. Treat them with courtesy and they'll run their legs off to help you find a picture of Genghis Khan blowing smoke rings.”

---

## Talking Book and Braille Library TRIVIA TIME!

We're back with another Talking Book and Braille Library Trivia Time! But before we get to this month's question, here is last month's answer:

*The National Library Service has several key initiatives as part of their \_\_\_\_\_ modernization efforts, including their new \_\_\_\_\_-on-Demand program? **Braille***

Thank you to everyone who submitted their answers, and feel free to keep participating each month. Here is this month's question:

*Q: The young readers book selected to represent Oregon at the 2022 National Book Festival is?*

- *What Strange Paradise by Omar El Akkad*
- *Apples to Oregon by Deborah Hopkinson*
- *Game of Fox & Squirrels by Jenn Reese*
- *The Turning by Emily Whitman*



**Hint:** you can find the answer in a [previous issue of \*Connections\*](#).

Click the button above to submit your answer to the trivia question. If you provide your name and contact information and answer the question correctly, **you may win a fun prize!**

Check back next month to see the answer, and we'll be back with more trivia in future *Connections* issues.

---

## CONTACTS

### **Library Support & Development Services Program Manager**

[Buzzy Nielsen](#), 971-375-3486

### **Talking Book & Braille Library Manager**

[Elke Bruton](#), 971-375-3509

### **Government Information & Library Services Manager**

[Caren Aqata](#), 971-375-3483

### **Chief Operating Officer**

[Susan Westin](#), 503-378-5435

### **State Librarian**

[Wendy Cornelisen](#), 503-378-4367

*Connections* is published monthly by the State Library of Oregon, and was formerly known as *Letters to Libraries Online*.

---

## Mission

The State Library of Oregon cultivates, preserves, and delivers library and information services to foster lifelong learning and community engagement.

---



[Click here if you wish to change how you receive this newsletter or unsubscribe.](#)

**Our mailing address is:**

State Library of Oregon, 250 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

*Copyright ©2022, All rights reserved.*