

Learning Newsletter

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To PLA and Back: A Special Report from Portland

*Lisa
McKenney,
ACLS,
guest author.*



The Public Library Association (PLA) Conference was held in Portland, Oregon March 23-27th. The city of Portland has a wonderful transportation system that enabled conference goers to easily travel from area hotels to the convention center, not to mention area shopping and restaurants, for free. The system even went to the airport for a small fee.

The workshop highlights for the conference for me were Book Buzz with Nancy Pearl, What's New in Fantasy, Paranormal, and Science Fiction for Teens and Adults (a gift to myself :), and oddly enough, I Have These Statistics--Now What? Getting Started on the Path of Collection Analysis. Other highlights for me included hearing the keynote speaker, Pulitzer Prize winning speaker Nick Kristof and listening to a short concert by Natalie Merchant prior to the keynote. These two individuals started things off on an inspiring and positive note, as they each spoke of the impact libraries

had on their own successful lives. They also provided critical reminders of the great difference librarians can make daily in the lives of our customers and in our communities, things that go way beyond the collections and walls of the buildings to the heart of libraries: the interactions of the customers and the library staff.

In addition, a lot of my focus for the conference was on collections and collection development, so I also took the opportunity to visit the booths in the exhibit hall. I picked up a couple of galley copies of *Fang* by James Patterson and *The Passage* by Justin Cronin. I also spoke with some vendors like BWI, discussing their services and discounts; checked out Brainfuse to compare it with Tutor.com; spoke to our ILS vendor TLC to ask some questions and make some suggestions; and scoped out some library card vendors for our upcoming First Library Card project. (I may have picked up a free cookie here and there along the way!)

I've come back with some definite ideas and action items: First, I am running reports to get relative use figures for our collections to help us better identify where our weeding needs to go deeper and what areas of our collection are successful and need to be expanded. My goal is to complete these reports and present findings within the month so that we can move forward with next fiscal year's collection budget allotment with accuracy. Next, I am going to follow up with some other collection vendors to see if they offer competitive pricing, convenient services,

etc. Finally, I've got some good information to use for my proposal/plan for the First Library Card.

Thanks to Western Maryland Regional Library for supporting the trip to the conference.



"Well Portland Oregon
and sloe gin fizz
If that ain't love
then tell me what is
Well I lost my heart
it didn't take no time
But that ain't all.

I lost my mind in Oregon"
Loretta Lynn & Jack White

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Klickitat and All That: A Special Report from Portland



*John Taube, ACLS,
guest author*

PLA in Portland and the home of the Quimby family. Lots of new ideas to think about and its always good to wander amidst people who have the same interests as you so when you suggest something wacky, at least they have a context.

One idea that struck me in these tough economic times was if we have to limit our collection spending than we need to be as fast and efficient as possible getting items back on the shelves. The session on "leaning your library " covered this area and reminded me of Frederick Taylor's time and motion studies, plus the recently in vogue ISO 9000 certification. Ask at your library, how many people touch an item before it is back on the shelf? Can you get it back to the shelf in less than 5 touches?

Unfortunately the LITA top ten tech trends was not their best work. If you think about time, convenience, and independence as the new currency, how can libraries assist our patrons make the most of their daily lives? Can technology help? Can technology help us form better relationships with our patrons?

Some good and reasonably priced stuff in the vendor areas as well. I was pleased to find web based scheduling software for our whole system would cost about \$330. What do you think, would you like centralized scheduling of all staff?

Also thanks to some good questions, it dawned on me that if patron reviews of books is to succeed (be used by other patrons) in our catalog, we need a lot more reviews and multiple reviews per item. Which brought me to [chilfresh](#) a company that can insert

those reviews and comments from patrons around the work into our catalog.

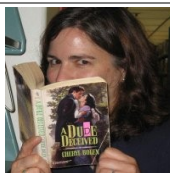


Visiting vendors also helped clarify the path so that our patrons can pay their fines by credit or debit card from within the library and from home.

*Read more about John's library adventures on his blog:
<http://aclsdirector.blogspot.com/>*

So You Say You Want a Revolution: A Special Report from Portland

*Carrie Willson-Plymire, WMRL,
guest author*



I love a good revolution...but are the people ready? Maybe so, maybe not, but Rangeview Libraries in Colorado may have something to teach all of us, ready or not. They have had a revolution. They went from being the lowest funded library

system in Colorado to having a community vote in 2006 that increased funding and allowed for a fresh start. Staff got together to re-imagine library services; they even went so far as to replace the term "library" with "Anythink".

This explanation of Anythink is from one of their brochures, "Anythink is a way of saying that you can do anything here. Anything you can possibly think of. It's also an operating

philosophy for everything we do- from hiring new staff to purchasing new materials and developing new programs. The more imaginative and collaborative we can be, the better we can serve our customers."

Rangeview has ditched Dewey classification and fines. Books are arranged according to a two-level book store classification

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So You Say You Want a Revolution: PLA Special Report, pt. 3

(Relationships-Marriage instead of 306.7). They've rearranged the physical shelving so that there are welcoming places to sit and read, places to be creative with technology, and gaming areas. They've put an emphasis on great signage so that customers can readily identify the sections they want to visit. Their staff are everywhere but behind a desk and their dress code consists of Anythink t-shirts which come with various Anythink genre descriptions.

For Mystery:

- Any Accusation
- Any Culprit
- Any Twist
- Anybody's Guess

This session challenged me to think about who is at the center of every library policy and purchase decision? Is it our customer? Or is it our library? Do we do what is easiest for staff or for our customers?

Check out their ideas and think about how putting the customer at the center of everything that your library does would change business.

<http://www.anythinklibraries.org/anythinktank>



Are we agile enough to change the things that don't put the customer first? Again from their brochure, "no matter what their job title the first priority of any Anythinker on the floor is to help you find inspiration and support it with information." Appealing...



Technology Spotlight: A Pen That Is Mightier Than A Sword

Beginning May 7th, library staff across the region will be able to experiment with an emerging technology: Livescribe's Pulse Smartpen. This technology is made freely available to us for a limited time through a program called, "Lab In A Box," courtesy of the MASIE Center.

So, what is a Smartpen? Livescribe markets itself as "paper-based computing." The pen has the ability to read, write, speak, and listen. For example, if you are taking notes at a meeting the Smartpen allows you to



automatically synchronize your written notes (on special Smartpen paper) with what is being said during the meeting. You can play those notes back to yourself and download the recordings (including your handwritten text) onto your computer.

So, how can libraries and library staff benefit from Smartpen technology? That is only one question you might ask yourself when reviewing this product—and yes, if you choose to participate in the Lab In A Box program you are asked to submit a review of the Smartpen to the MASIE Center's wiki which you can see here: <http://bit.ly/cZax5V>

Consult your resident staff development coordinator if you have questions!

New Jersey Train-the-Trainer



Julie Zamostny,
WMRL, usual author

During the middle of March I was fortunate enough to attend a four-day Train the Trainer seminar in Eatontown, NJ. Although the program was designed with New Jersey librarians in mind, they were kind enough to open registration up to the surrounding areas. Alicia Hyre from Harford County Public Library was the only other Maryland library employee who attended --and like all of the other Maryland librarians I've met thus far, she's totally awesome and is doing great things for her library! I met several wonderful NJ librarians to whom my heart goes out during their current budget crisis. There were folks from public libraries, academic libraries, the State Library of NJ, special libraries; it was awesome!

The program was pretty intense. The first three days consisted of jam-packed schedules of 9AM-9PM

classes with scheduled breaks and meals in between. We covered everything from adult learning principles, how to plan effective trainings, how to use training aids appropriately, ways to incorporate technology into training, group facilitation, and evaluation.

Then we had one week to put what we had learned to the test. We were tasked with writing an instruction plan and training guide for an upcoming course that we will actually be executing at our library system and we had to come back on March 26th to present a select portion of

I put my foot on my tank and I began to roll
Moanin' siren, 'twas the state patrol
So I let out my wings and then I blew my horn
Bye bye New Jersey, I've become airborne

Chuck Berry, You Can't Catch Me

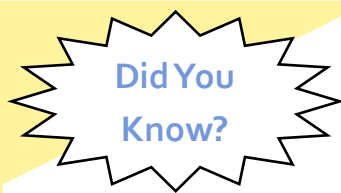
that training to our peers so we could receive feedback and so we could practice with a captive audience. This was an extremely valuable exercise. I was able to write my instruction plan and training guide for the self-defense program I'm presenting to the Washington County branch staff at their meeting on May 10th. I received some useful

feedback that allowed me to edit my plan and guide to make the training more participant-friendly!

As I start to get ideas for home-grown continuing education/professional development (whatever you'd like to call them) courses, I will most definitely continue to write up instructional plans and guides for each one. These will come in handy as well if the libraries across the state move forward with the idea to form a staff development coop. The instructional guides and plans will be posted electronically for anyone to download and edit to suit their needs!

Lastly, for your reading pleasure, here are a couple of fun NJ facts that I learned during my 4 days in the Garden State:

- The bartender at the hotel I stayed at worked as an extra for the TV show, *The Sopranos*
- You cannot pump your own gas at NJ gas stations. They are full-service only.
- You cannot make left turns off of most NJ highways; instead, you have to use these sideways-horseshoe-shaped exits that the Natives call, "jug handles."



Julie is always looking for guests to contribute to the Learning Newsletter

content and she especially **LOVES** it when all three counties are represented!

So, with this in mind, please think of all the wonderful things you and your colleagues have been learning about. Did you attend or present at MLA?

Great! Why not share your experiences with those who didn't attend?! Let us live vicariously through your stories!

All entries should be at least 250 words but there is no upper limit! Send all submissions to:

jzamostny@washcolibrary.org

MAY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

May is stress management month in the Western Maryland Libraries!

						1
2	3 Stress Management @ Hagerstown 2PM-3PM FREE	4	5 Build Rapport With The Language of Influence 11-Noon, FREE	6 SLRC Tour 9:00AM-3:30PM FREE Registration re- quired!	7	8
9	10 Stress Management & Self Defense @ Clearspring Branch Staff Mtg	11 Trendy Topics: One day online confer- ence on eBooks & audiobooks \$40	12	13 Organization 2.0 Webinar 3PM-4PM FREE	14	15
16	17 Stress Management @ Frostburg All Staff Meeting 9AM-10AM	18 Trends in Teen Literature: The Independent View FREE Webinar	19	20 VIPs, Why You Need Them for Advocacy. \$39 for YALSA \$49 for non-YALSA Webinar	21	22
23	24 Stress Management @ Hagerstown 2PM-3PM FREE	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 Memorial Day Libraries Closed 	<p>For more information and to register for any of the events listed here, please visit the online training calendar at: http://bit.ly/b766E</p> <p>Have questions or ideas for a staff development opportunity? Please contact Julie Zamostny Email: jzamostny@washcolibrary.org Phone: 301-331-3821 or ext. 171</p>				

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New Titles!



The Readers' Advisory Handbook, from ALA Editions is currently being cataloged and will be added to the professional collection for anyone to enjoy. Until then, here's a brief preview of what you will find in this paperbacked tome:

- "How to advise patrons on all kinds of media, from fiction and nonfiction to audiobooks, graphic novels and even reference materials
- How to provide services to senior citizens, teens and even readers who are incarcerated
- How to handle author visits and book groups
- How to enhance storytelling, even for adults

Covering everything from getting to know a library's materials to marketing and promoting RA, this practical handbook will help you expand services immediately without adding costs or training time."

(From the ALA Editions site: <http://bit.ly/9cYqfD>)

Putting Customers First, a 40 minute DVD from Library Video Network, is a fantastic way to introduce or freshen up on the tenets of providing great customer service. Unlike other customer service training videos, Putting Customers First shares vignettes from two library systems that have been extremely successful in talking the talk and walking the walk of exceptional library hospitality across face-to-face, telephone, email, and chat interactions.

"The Columbus (OH) Metropolitan Library implemented a 48-hour turnaround time in its technical services department in order to provide better customer service and keep their library relevant to its customers. The West Palm Beach (FL) Library redesigned its appearance and style to better serve their customers and have seen a dramatic increase in usage as a result." (From the LVN site: <http://bit.ly/947GJt>)

The Best Defense Against Stress? Laughter With a Side of Flarp

Since I've unofficially branded May as Stress Management Month for the western Maryland libraries, I thought it would be proper to have a section in the Learning Newsletter showcasing effective stress relievers.

We library employees are constantly fighting an uphill battle against our industry's stereotypes that paint us as cardigan-wearing, sensible-shoe-shuffling, shushers who only cut loose once the lights are out. I don't know about you but I happen to love my cardigans and Hush Puppies but I have yet to shush anyone and I am making a concerted effort to cut loose at work (gasp!) while the lights are on (double gasp!).

"How does she do it?!" you might marvel. It's no secret; it's Flarp.

Ever since I returned from the MLA Annual Conference, I've become a changed librarian. I had the pleasure of winning a trivia round at the Pub Quiz and I got to choose a prize. There on the table before me was a small, modestly packaged, plastic container of green goop. How could I possibly have chosen anything else, like a bottle of wine or a bookmark (gasp!)? Everything else paled in comparison to Flarp.



I quickly discovered the powerful, stress relieving magic that is Flarp. Just having

the container in my hands made me and everyone within earshot laugh for quite a while. Another librarian was so moved by Flarp's power that she chose the last container as her prize when her team won a trivia round!

Now I keep my Flarp on my desk within quick reach for those stress relieving emergencies; I've even started to make it a habit to end my workday with a minute or two of Flarping because there's no better way to end a day at work with anything other than laughter.

If you'd like to see what Flarp can do for you just stop by my desk and for those of you @ ACLS and RELIB, I'll loan it to you through the blue bins!