

# OLA Quarterly



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

The 1905 ALA Conference in Portland:  
"A Triumph of Audacity"

Public Library Buildings in Oregon:  
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From Library School to Information Studies:  
Professional Education for Oregon Librarians Then and Now

Fall 2009

Vol 15 • No 3

# OLAQ

The *OLA Quarterly* is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association.

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

2

The 1905 ALA Conference in Portland:  
"A Triumph of Audacity"  
*Cheryl Gunselman*

8

Public Library Buildings in Oregon:  
A Historical Sketch  
*Jim Scheppke*

12

Writing A History of the  
Corvallis-Benton County Public Library  
*Thomas C. McClintock*

15

Preparing a History of Your Library  
*Elizabeth Nielsen*

16

From Library School  
to Information Studies:  
Professional Education for Oregon  
Librarians Then and Now  
*Valery King, Andrew Cherbas  
& Linda V. Malone*



**Upcoming  
Issue**

**Winter 2009**

*Across the Great Divide*

# Oregon's 150th: Libraries Then and Now

Oregonians have commemorated the 150th anniversary of our state during 2009 with a myriad of activities, including the highly successful statewide Oregon Reads program co-sponsored by the Oregon Library Association. This sesquicentennial anniversary also offers us the opportunity to reflect on the history of our own libraries and the library profession in Oregon. For decades, libraries have served as the conduit to knowledge in a democratic society. Now, as in the past, libraries offer sanctuary through difficult economic times by providing access to much-needed information and services. This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* provides views of the history of Oregon libraries through several lenses and includes a selection of historic photographs depicting Oregon libraries and library services during the 20th century.

Cheryl Gunselman's article highlights the audacious librarians who were instrumental in bringing the 1905 American Library Association (ALA) annual conference to Portland, at a time when Oregon libraries were mere fledglings and the ALA conference was rarely held in the west. Imagine planning a conference that required several days of train travel for most attendees and included a post-conference Alaskan cruise.

Jim Scheppke sketches the history of Oregon public library buildings' construction by focusing on two major phases of development of library building practices separated by more

than 70 years—Carnegie libraries built before 1920 and new or expanded libraries built since 1990.

A retired history professor, Tom McClintock, describes his own experience of researching and writing an extensive history of the Corvallis public library. His article is followed by a checklist of how to research and write your library's history.

Professional training for librarians in Oregon has evolved significantly in the last 30 years. Valery King recalls her experience as a graduate in the last library science class at the University of Oregon while Linda Malone and Andrew Cherbas discuss the advantages and disadvantages of distance and hybrid distance-weekend programs which have become the norm for training Oregon librarians since the 1990s.

A photographer's lens captures a moment in time, an expression, an event, and a multitude of other details long-since forgotten. The historic photographs included in this issue depict early library buildings and a variety of library services throughout the state. They remind us that, as much as libraries have changed, the core principles of librarianship remain the same. The photographs are from the collections of the American Library Association Archives at the University of Illinois, the Oregon State Library collections held by the Oregon State Archives, and the Oregon State University Libraries Digital Collections. Many other photographs of Oregon libraries are available online in the Or-

gon Historic Photograph Collections hosted by the Salem Public Library (<http://photos.salemhistory.net/>).

Historical tidbits about Oregon libraries are interspersed among the articles and photographs throughout the issue. These have been selected from the online *Oregon Encyclopedia*; Thomas C. McClintock's *The Best Gift*; Web sites of the Oregon State University Archives, the Oregon Library Association, and the Pacific Northwest Library Association; and personal communication from Cheryl Hancock (Harney County Library).

We thank all the authors for their contributions to this issue and extend special appreciation to Teresa Landers (formerly of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library) who served as a co-editor of the issue in its early development and recruited several of the article authors.

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# The 1905 ALA Conference in Portland: “A Triumph of Audacity”

by Cheryl Gunselman  
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Imagine an American Library Association (ALA) annual meeting in Portland, with just a few hundred attendees, a program featuring the most prominent library leaders in the United States, plenty of seating for every session, and lots of opportunities for sightseeing and socializing. This ALA meeting, one of the most remarkable episodes in Oregon library history, occurred in 1905, during the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition. Portland's selection as a meeting site was controversial and risky. It occupied a very remote corner of the United States, thousands of

miles from the cities and towns where most ALA members lived and worked. The ALA annual meeting had been held west of the Rocky Mountains only twice in the history of the organization, in San Francisco in 1891 and in Denver-Colorado Springs in 1895. Some ALA members opposed the decision to hold another meeting on the Pacific coast. The scale of the meeting a hundred years ago was much, much smaller than in the present day, with hundreds of attendees rather than tens of thousands, but at the time it was a large event, and the fact that Portland was selected as the conference location was a major accomplishment for Pacific Northwest libraries and librarians.

In the early 20th century, as in the early 21st, the biggest event in American librarianship each year was the ALA annual meeting. Beginning with the first gathering in Philadelphia in 1876, ALA was the primary organization for the emerging profession, and the annual meeting promoted professional development and strengthened the professional community. Attendance at ALA annual meetings required a substantial investment of time and money, and travel across great distances was much more time consuming when the primary mode of transport was the passenger train. Transcontinental trips took several days each way. But the benefits were great as well. Librarians, library trustees, library educators and others were defining and shaping American libraries, and the opportunity to exchange information with colleagues was an essential part of the process; the selection of a distant location and special, exclusive sightseeing excursions added an appealing leisure element for attendees.

In 1905 the state of Oregon was just beginning to engage actively in the development of libraries and library services. The Oregon Library Commission, predecessor of today's State Library and an essential

1805

NORTHERN PACIFIC  
YELLOWSTONE PARK

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— in 1905 —

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NORTHERN PACIFIC  
YELLOWSTONE PARK

1905

Excursion Train to Portland, 1905. Advertisement for excursion train to Portland, Oregon, for the Lewis and Clark Exposition and the American Libraries Association annual conference was published in *Public Libraries*. (*Public Libraries*, v. 10, page 157.)



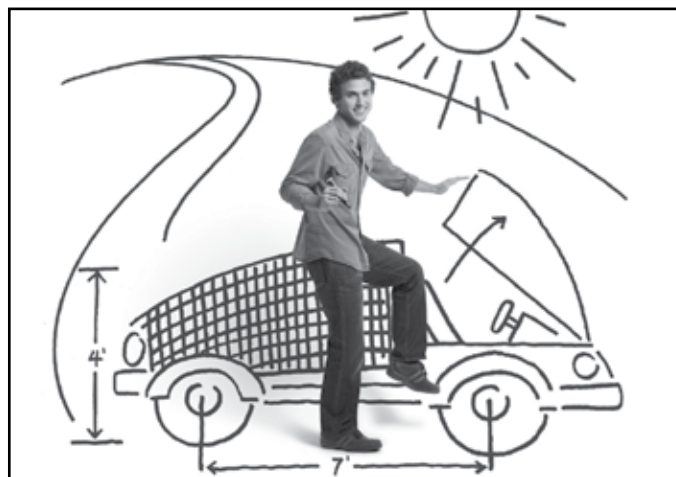
agency for organizing and supporting public libraries, was being established in Salem that summer. The state's first tax-supported public library had opened in Portland in 1902, and there were only four libraries in Oregon at the time of the conference, according to Charles Wesley Smith of the Seattle Public Library in his paper, "Library Conditions in the Northwest" (Smith 1905, 10). What the state lacked in library tradition it made up in leadership, a confident view of future prospects, and pride in what the "missionary spirit" of its library supporters had been able to accomplish in a short time. Oregon and the rest of the Pacific Northwest were rapidly building on the experience of regions with longer histories in library matters to select models and best practices for establishing new, full-fledged modern libraries, especially free public ones.

The choice of Portland as the 1905 conference location began with a formal invitation at the 1904 meeting at St. Louis, during the world's fair. Mary Frances Isom, head librarian at the Library Association of Portland, and Thomas Lamb Eliot, a member of the library board and a prominent retired Portland minister, attended the meeting and extended the invitation in person. It was an audacious and improbable act. Isom and Eliot, and their fellow library supporters in Oregon, hoped to persuade the ALA executive board that holding the 1905 meeting in Portland would raise national awareness of library conditions in the Pacific Northwest, and would increase momentum for library development in the region. They were aware that ALA had a history of meeting during world's fairs, beginning with the first meeting at the Philadelphia International Centennial Exhibition in 1876, followed by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Many Americans, including mem-

bers of professional associations, enjoyed the entertainment and educational opportunities provided by these extravaganzas. But even with the attractions and infrastructure of the Lewis and Clark fair to enhance attendance and enrich the program, ALA took a risk in accepting the invitation to meet so far from the profession's geographical center.

The attendance for the conference was somewhat low compared with other early 20th century conferences, but considering the distance most attendees had to travel the participation was strong, and far exceeded some very pessimistic predictions. There were 359 registered attendees at Portland, 267 women and 92 men, out of a total membership of 1228. The Atlantic seaboard was well represented, with 113 individuals making the transcontinental trip. The attendance compared fairly well with the prior year in St. Louis, 577, and the following year in Rhode Island, 891 (ALA 1905, 224; ALA 2008, 167).

Some Portland conference attendees were active members of the first professional generation of librarians, many of them founding members and former presidents of ALA. All were well known within a community that was still fairly small, and some of them



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ALA conference attendees in Portland, 1905. Clement W. Andrews and Frederick M. Crunden and colleagues enjoy the Portland sunshine during a break in the annual conference. Photograph by F.W. Faxon. (Courtesy of the University of Illinois, American Library Association Archives, Conference Photographs, 1876-1976, Record Series 99/1/14, Box 5, Faxon Collection, 1894-1932.)

were genuine celebrities. Melvil Dewey was the best known of these, and many others were distinguished pioneers and leaders whose reputations and achievements made them welcome, honored guests. The attendees represented the full spectrum of professional practice: reference service, classification, cataloging, indexing, training for librarianship, library equipment and buildings, publishing, and other specialties. These pioneers mingled with front-line library workers and other colleagues as they strolled the streets of Portland, attended conference sessions downtown at the

Unitarian Church and the Portland public library, shared lodgings, and enjoyed the fair. ALA President Ernest C. Richardson of Princeton University pronounced the meeting “a triumph of audacity” and “a triumph of success” (ALA 1905, 137).

The organizers and planners of the meeting showed skill and creativity in their efforts to attract, entertain, and inform their guests. They promoted the meeting, and especially the related excursions, in *Library Journal* and *Public Libraries* for several months in advance. They arranged for librarians from the eastern parts of the country to travel together by special train, allowing several days of mixing business with leisure, with plenty of time for informal pre- and post-conference discussions and appealing excursions including side trips to Yellowstone, the Canadian Rockies, California, and a steamship cruise to Alaska that attracted 115 people. One charming preliminary notice on “The Question of Clothes” appeared in *Library Journal* in March. Portland librarian Mary Frances Isom joked that the city’s dry season was scheduled to begin on July 1, but she urged attendees to pack umbrellas and light raincoats, and offered detailed suggestions for clothing, mostly for women, for the meeting in Portland and for the excursions to Alaska, Yellowstone, and even for mountain climbing (ascents of Mt. Hood and Mt. Rainier). For Portland, she suggested thin shirtwaists and, for Yellowstone, short skirts, heavy boots, a sweater or golf jacket and a mosquito veil (Portland Local Committee 1905, 156).

The conference began on July 4 and continued for four days, with a fairly standard program including business meetings, six general sessions, several section and associated organization meetings, and social events. Pacific Northwest librarians and library supporters occupied prominent slots in the schedule. They took advantage of the



opportunity to showcase regional achievements and challenges for an audience that included individuals at every level of power and influence in American librarianship, from library “apprentices” and assistants to the Librarian of Congress. The scale of the meeting was almost incomprehensibly small compared with ALA today: general sessions were small enough to be held in the sanctuary of the Unitarian Church; there were only four sections (Catalog, College and Reference, State Library Commissions, and Children’s Librarians); and it was possible to hold receptions and host excursions that included all attendees. But even with this comfortable, intimate scale, some participants were tempted to skip elements of the program to pursue their own personal interests. A post-conference reviewer identified as “A Missionary Spirit” reported almost exclusively on social and recreational matters in Portland, and observed that the Lewis and Clark fair “drew many enthusiastic members of the Anti-Sessions Section” (ALA 1905, 204).

The program for the meeting was substantial and well-organized, and gathered mostly positive reviews. In an editorial in the professional journal *Public Libraries*, Mary Eileen Ahern observed that “the tone of the sessions was new, there was a loosening up of old precedents along conventional grounds.” She further noted that it was a landmark meeting, that it would be remembered as marking what was before and what came after it (Ahern 1905a, 404). It raised national interest in library conditions in the Pacific Northwest, and after the meeting more librarians from the East and Midwest relocated to the region to accept professional positions. Cornelia Marvin, an expert on library development newly hired from Wisconsin to head the new Oregon Library Commission, observed in her 1907 report to the legislature that the meeting awakened an interest in libraries in the state,

**Some sessions from the 1905  
Portland ALA program:**

- “Library Conditions in the Northwest,”  
Charles W. Smith,  
Seattle Public Library
- “The Library of Congress Catalog Cards,”  
J.C.M. Hanson,  
Library of Congress
- “The Library of Congress  
as a National Library,”  
Herbert Putnam,  
Librarian of Congress
- “The Uses of Government Documents,”  
Lodilla Ambrose,  
Northwestern University
- “Unity and Co-operation in Library Work,”  
Melvil Dewey
- “The Question of Trained Library Service,”  
Lutie Stearns,  
Wisconsin Free Library Commission
- “Library Administration on an Income  
of from \$1000 to \$5000 a Year:  
Economies in Plans and Methods,”  
Marilla Waite Freeman,  
Louisville Free Public Library
- “Traveling Libraries as a  
First Step in Library Development,”  
Gratia Countryman,  
Minneapolis Public Library
- “The Training of the Student  
in the Use of Books,”  
H. Ralph Mead,  
University of California
- “Carnegie Libraries,”  
a stereopticon presentation,  
Theodore Koch,  
University of Michigan



Portland, Oregon, is the site of the first public library west of the Mississippi River. The Library Association of Portland existed as a private subscription library with its own building, staff, and 37,000-volume collection when it opened to the public in 1902.


—Oregon Encyclopedia:  
<http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org>

and emphasized their importance as social and educational agencies. But she also criticized the program, and was quoted in a gossip note in *Public Libraries* stating that there were too many mediocre elements, and suggesting that ALA conference papers should be screened in advance. She did not name any individual speakers, but anyone who presented a local case study might have worried that he or she was “the individual who never understands that what he is doing at Podunk may possibly not be of paramount interest and usually has no connection with the subject in hand” (Ahern 1905b, 417).

In a strange postscript to the Portland meeting, Melvil Dewey was accused of improper conduct with some of the ALA women who traveled on the post-conference cruise to Alaska. He already had a reputation among female students and colleagues for unwelcome hugging, kissing, and other improper behavior. On the cruise, he sexually harassed some of the female travelers, and other ALA colleagues witnessed this conduct. During the following year there was widespread gossip about his behavior and increasing pressure for him to withdraw from any active role in ALA. The Portland conference was Dewey’s last as an active participant in ALA business and leadership (Wiegand 1996, 301-10).

The 1905 meeting was especially important for the professional development of Pacific Northwest librarians, strengthening their local community and offering a rare formal opportunity to meet and exchange ideas. The region had few libraries and fewer professional librarians, but some of these were graduates of America’s first library training schools, or apprenticeship programs in large libraries, who resisted professional isolation. They maintained connections with their former classmates and instructors, participated whenever

possible in formal conferences, and sought opportunities for cooperation with their colleagues in the region. They were just beginning to organize state and regional professional associations. The short-lived predecessor to today’s Oregon Library Association was established in December 1904 by the Oregon librarians who helped promote and organize the 1905 ALA meeting. The Washington Library Association was also brand-new, formed in the spring of 1905. The Oregon, Washington, and California library associations met jointly during the ALA conference and co-hosted a reception with the directors of the Portland public library for all attendees. The regional organization that would absorb the Oregon and Washington groups, the Pacific Northwest Library Association, did not yet exist. It would be formed in 1909, on the occasion of the region’s next world’s fair, the Yukon Pacific Exposition in Seattle.

The Portland meeting is beautifully documented. The conference papers and proceedings were published as a stand-alone volume, and the event was thoroughly covered in professional journals. The printed program for the conference has survived, along with a pamphlet describing the special train for attendees, originating in New York, with itineraries for sightseeing excursions and the outbound and return trips. The organizers even planned and published an elaborate souvenir book, *The Far Northwest*, documenting the special excursions by rail and sea, complementing the proceedings and other reports of the formal program. All of these documents offer a sense of the pioneer phase of Pacific Northwest libraries, the strong professional bonds among librarians and library supporters, and the audacity of a few Oregon individuals who invited their colleagues to visit when their work was only just getting started. 



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Wiegand, W. A. 1996. *Irrepressible Reformer*. Chicago: American Library Association.



Clackamas County Library Book Truck, circa 1940. Students at the Rock Creek School are lined up to enter the county book truck funded by the Works Project Administration. (Courtesy Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library, OSL0014.)



# Public Library Buildings in Oregon: A Historical Sketch

by **Jim Scheppke**  
*State Librarian,  
Oregon State Library*

If you are looking for the first public library built in Oregon, you'll have to settle for driving past the corner of Stark and Broadway in downtown Portland where a parking garage stands today. That is the former site of a building that would become the first public library in Oregon, constructed by the Library Association of Portland in 1893. When it was constructed it was not a "public library" in the strict sense of that term. At the time, the Library Association of Portland did not operate a public library, but a subscription library. It was the most successful of several subscription libraries that emerged in towns in 19th century Oregon, beginning as far back as 1840 (McClintock 2008, 29). In 1893 the new library on Stark Street was not open to the general public, but only to those who could afford a hefty annual subscription of \$12 per year—about \$270 in today's dollars (Gunselman 2001, 435).

Before 1893 none of Oregon's subscription libraries occupied their own building.

The first subscription library in Oregon City was located in a private residence, and other such libraries were located in borrowed or rented quarters. But in 1889 Ella M. Smith left her \$125,000 estate to the Library Association of Portland which enabled the members to build an imposing new library in the Classical style at a cost of \$130,000 (Ritz 2000, 12-13). The building opened in 1893 with a collection of 21,000 books (Rowe 1939, 16). Nine years later, in 1902, the building became a real public library, the first in Oregon, under the terms of a funding agreement between the Library Association and the City of Portland. This opened the library to everyone in Portland, after nearly four decades in which the Library Association served only the elite of Portland. Shortly thereafter, the Association contracted with Multnomah County, and the library became one of only a handful of county libraries in the U.S. (Gunselman 2001, 442-446).

At the same time as these developments were taking place in Portland, Andrew



Carnegie Library in Dallas, Oregon, circa 1912. The city of Dallas received a grant of \$10,000 in December 7, 1911, for construction of this library. (Courtesy Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library, OSL0030.)



Carnegie had embarked upon what is still today the greatest philanthropic project ever, constructing 1,679 public library buildings in 1,412 communities in the U.S. at a cost of over \$40 million, between 1886 and 1919 (Bobinski 1969, 3). In general, Carnegie was willing to fund the entire cost of a library in return for a community's pledge to provide an appropriate site and to fund the library operations from tax sources in an amount equivalent to 10% of the building grant per year.

In Oregon, 31 Carnegie libraries were built between about 1901 and 1920. The first Carnegie grant of \$165,000 went to the Library Association of Portland to construct seven branches throughout Portland. Then in December, 1903, Carnegie made a grant of \$10,000 to construct the first public library in Eugene. Four years later, grants were made to construct the first public libraries in Baker City, Salem, and The Dalles. The last Carnegie library in Oregon was completed in Grants Pass in 1920. The total amount granted to Oregon was \$478,000 (Bobinski 1969, 207-242). Out of 46 states that received Carnegie library grants, Oregon ranked 22nd in the amount of funding received—not bad for a sparsely populated far western state (Bobinski 1969, 17).

Today, only 10 of the 31 Oregon Carnegie libraries are still being used as public libraries. Carnegie libraries are notoriously difficult to expand and turn into functional modern libraries, but creative efforts have been made to do so. The Ashland Branch of the Jackson County Library turned their Carnegie library into the children's library and added on a separate wing for adults, connected to the Carnegie library by an indoor walkway. The libraries in Newberg and Hood River are also, in my opinion, particularly creative and successful examples of expanding and adapting Carnegie libraries to meet contemporary needs.

The first two decades of the 20th century saw the first public library building boom

in Oregon, fueled by the establishment of new libraries in many Oregon communities and the lure of Mr. Carnegie's incomparable philanthropy. Another notable building from this era (not funded by Carnegie) was the Central Library in downtown Portland that was built in 1913 on 10th Street to replace the older main library at Stark and Broadway, dedicated only 20 years earlier. Designed by noted Portland architect A.E. Doyle, the Central Library today is one of the most beloved buildings in Portland and is unusual in having been built big enough in 1913 to still be adequate as a main library today (Ritz 2000, 35-43). The Central Library underwent extensive renovations from 1995 to 1997 that greatly improved its functionality (Ritz 2000, 69-75). Today it is the first library in Oregon to sport a "green roof" with plantings that create energy savings.

Public library construction slowed down after the first two decades of the 20th century. Carnegie grants were no longer available and the country had entered the Depression and World War II which caused some decline in the construction of public buildings. A notable exception was the Corvallis Public Library, designed by Pietro Belluschi, one of Oregon's most accomplished 20th century architects, completed in 1931 (McClintock 2008, 90-100). Like the Central Library, this building is also well-loved by its community. It has been expanded twice, most recently in the early 1990s (McClintock 2008, 171-180).

The postwar decades saw surprisingly little public library construction in Oregon. For the most part, the buildings built at the beginning of the century were still in use, though many were run down and terribly undersized. A good example is the Salem Public Library, which, in the 1960s was still occupying the small Carnegie library completed in 1912 to serve a population of only about 15,000. Finally, in 1972, the

The Oregon State University alumnus, *Carry Me Back*, is dedicated to "Mother Kidder," the much-loved College librarian from 1908 until her death in 1920. Her body was "laid in state" in the newly completed library building before interment.

—Oregon State University Archives Web site



The Pacific Northwest Library Association was founded in 1909 at a meeting held in conjunction with the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition in Seattle.

—PNLA Web site

Library benefited from citizen support for a new civic center, including a new city hall and library.

Fortunately, beginning in the late 1980s, momentum began to build to replace many of the older public library facilities around the state that had far exceeded their lifespan. Though Andrew Carnegie was no longer around to prime the pump, charitable foundations had begun to be established in the state, and many of them took a particular interest in helping to meet the need for new public libraries in many communities. The Meyer Memorial Trust was one of the first, and for many years one of the most important of these foundations that created strong incentives for local communities to vote for bond measures or raise funds in other ways to build new or expanded libraries. Other important support came from the Ford Family Foundation, the Collins Foundation, and the Oregon Community Foundation.

Support from charitable foundations, coupled with the clear need to replace aging and undersized libraries in most communities fueled a new late 20th century library building boom that far exceeded the boom at the beginning of the century. The desire for new libraries seemed to be contagious. When one community showed they could build a wonderful new library, the neighboring community would develop the motivation to do the same.

Since 1990, the State Library has recorded a total of 107 new or expanded public libraries constructed in the state, about half of all the libraries and branch libraries in Oregon. A few counties, like Multnomah, Jackson, Deschutes, and Baker, have seen all of their public libraries replaced, expanded, or improved. Only six of Oregon's 36 counties have not seen at least one new library built in the past three decades.

Another notable contributor to the Oregon public library building boom of recent

decades is architect Richard Turi of North Bend. Turi got his start designing a new library for his hometown of North Bend and went on to design libraries for small and medium-sized communities throughout the state. By the time he completed his final design for the Seaside Public Library which opened in September 2008, Turi had designed about one in every five new libraries built in the past three decades. Turi is noted for designing spacious, moderately priced libraries that can be run with limited staff. If you travel Oregon you will spot Turi libraries up and down the Oregon coast, in the Willamette Valley, and as far east as Sisters and Prineville. His achievement is remarkable and will never be equaled.


Among the more recent Oregon public libraries, one of the most notable is the Eugene Public Library in downtown Eugene, which replaced a seriously undersized and inadequate facility. It was the first library in Oregon to utilize RFID technology for circulating library materials, and a sophisticated automated materials handling system to sort returned books for reshelving. Just this year the new Albany Public Library became the second Oregon public library to utilize these new technologies.

As we approach the end of the first decade of the 21st century, it appears the latest Oregon public library building boom may have run its course. Construction continues, but at a slower pace. However, the "library contagion" is still out there. Residents of communities that have not built a new library in the past 30 years see new libraries all around them. It becomes a matter of civic pride to replace a clearly substandard library with something better.

There is still a serious need for new public libraries in a number of Oregon communities. Some that come to mind are Astoria, Gladstone, Irrigon, Lakeview, Maupin, Monroe, Oregon City, Scio, and Sheridan. There are great old Carnegie



libraries still in use in Union and Enterprise that, given adequate investment in restoration and improvement, could be made into 21st century libraries. Most of these communities are well aware of their needs and they are working on them. Fortunately, Oregon's wonderful, charitable foundations, that I mentioned earlier, are still highly motivated to help. There are even a few newer ones like the Paul G. Allen Foundation and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation that have been most generous in recent years.

Oregon is a great public library state. We are nationally recognized for having some of the best and most heavily used public libraries in the country. This phenomenon owes a lot to the outstanding facilities we have built in recent years—to the citizens, elected officials and charitable foundations that supported them, to the architects who designed them, and not the least, to the library trustees, directors and staff who inspired and guided their construction. 

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Story hour at the Oregon City Public Library, 1940. These members of the Elevator Reading Group kept a record of their summer reading in booklets supplied by the library. These were placed on a miniature elevator constructed by a high school student. (Courtesy Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library, OSL0013.)



# Writing A History of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library

by **Thomas C. McClintock**  
*Professor Emeritus of History,  
Oregon State University*

In 1999, the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library celebrated its 100th anniversary and I was invited by the committee planning the centennial celebration to write a history of the institution. I believe there were two reasons for the invitation. I had been extensively involved with the library including membership on its Board of Directors for several years and I am a professionally-trained historian, having been a faculty member of the Department of History of Oregon State University for 30 years. I was given no guidelines as to the scope of the history, nor was I given a deadline for its completion. However, I suspect that what the committee had in mind was perhaps a booklet of 20–30 pages, to be completed within a few months. Instead, almost a decade later, I finally delivered to the committee a book of over 200 pages in length and with 20 chapters. Furthermore, I did not mention the Corvallis library until the end of the fourth chapter.

As a professional historian, I was trained that, if readers are to understand and appreciate the importance of historical events, institutions, or individuals, they must be placed in an historical context. So, the first four chapters of the Corvallis library history address the birth and development of libraries through the 17th century; the evolution of the free public library in the United States from the colonial era to 1900; the arrival of libraries in Oregon; and early libraries in Corvallis from 1870 to 1899. These chapters were based on what historians call secondary (published) sources such as books and journal articles.

For the balance of the book, I relied on primary sources such as minutes, which are extremely time-consuming to consult. These primary sources included the minutes of the Corvallis Library's Board of Directors, Foundation, and Friends; the Corvallis City Council; the Corvallis

Woman's Club (they intended its name to be singular); and the Benton County Court (which later became the County Board of Commissioners). The Corvallis Woman's Club Records are housed at the Benton County Historical Museum. City Council minutes are available in typed form in the office of the Corvallis City Manager; the County Court minutes are available on microforms in the Benton County Courthouse. Minutes of the library's Board of Directors, Foundation, and Friends are housed at the Corvallis library.

The minutes of the Corvallis Woman's Club (1883–1935) were absolutely essential for understanding the first four decades of the history of the library. The club's library, which it founded in 1899, traditionally has been considered the beginning of the Corvallis library. In 1914, members of the club were among the Corvallis leaders who persuaded the Corvallis City Council to establish the Corvallis Public Library; three Woman's Club members were appointed to the first board (one as chair); and the Club library became the nucleus of the new public library's initial collection. For about the first 15 years, the new library was housed in rooms in the city hall; but in 1921, the Woman's Club purchased two lots across the street from what would become Central Park in downtown Corvallis and renovated the house on the property for the library. In 1931, when the city council finally agreed to submit a bond measure to the Corvallis voters to fund the construction of a library building, the club promised that, if the bond measure was approved, the club would transfer the ownership of its two lots to the city as the site for the building. The bond measure passed, the club transferred the two lots to the city, and this continues to be the site of the twice-expanded Corvallis-Benton County Public Library today.

Another extremely valuable primary



source was the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*. This was particularly true during the several decades when Robert Ingalls was the editor/publisher of the newspaper as he was extremely supportive of the library. Perhaps the best evidence of this is the following opinion which he expressed in an editorial in the May 20, 1963 *Gazette-Times* and which is the source of the title of my book:

Of all the marks of an intelligent, civilize and progressive community, an adequate library is probably the most obvious. And the best gift we can give to our children besides first rate schools is a first rate library.

Any history of a library must address the library's building, its original design and construction, and any additions or modifications. Fortuitously, the Portland architect the Corvallis City Council selected to design the library building in 1931 was Pietro Belluschi, who would become one of the greatest American architects of the 20th century. At the time, he was head designer of A.E. Doyle & Associates, the most influential architectural firm in Portland. Belluschi had just finished designing the Hauser Library at Reed College and, thus, was a logical choice to design the Corvallis library. The Corvallis library was a much more modest-sized building than the Reed library, but according to Belluschi's biographer, "Its distinction lay in the warm yet dignified character, simple geometric form . . . [and] subtly textured brickwork" of the building as well as its especially-attractive open-beamed interior (Clausen 1994, 72). As Belluschi's reputation grew nationally so did the architectural importance of the many buildings he designed in Portland and elsewhere in Oregon, including the Corvallis library. In spite of several proposals to move the library from the Belluschi building, major addi-



Oregon State Library's rural services bookmobile, 1958. (Courtesy Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library, OSL0010.)

tions to the building in 1965 and 1992 are architecturally compatible with the original Belluschi design. I included in my history of the library a brief biography of Belluschi, a discussion of his architectural importance, and photos of several of his renown buildings in Portland and nationally.

I had assumed that I would have to spend at least a couple of chapters on the financial history of the library. However, by the time I finished the book, I had found it necessary to devote four chapters just on the financial relationship between the county and the Corvallis library. Two of the chapters concentrated entirely on the unsuccessful efforts of the county to adequately fund the county library services the Corvallis library had agreed to provide. The third chapter on the financial relationship between the county and the city of Corvallis and its library concerned the funding of mobile library services in the county, particularly those provided by a custom-

By 1913, only three Oregon cities with a population over 3,000 did not have a free public library—Corvallis, Grants Pass, and Roseburg.

—McClintock's  
"The Best Gift"



built book trailer and a bookmobile. And the fourth of these chapters described the successful effort by the county in 1994 to stabilize financial support of the city library as well as the funding of county library services with approval by county voters of a library service district. I also discussed in considerable detail the Corvallis community's financial support through a very active Friends organization and the library's foundation, which is active in fundraising for the library's endowment as well as for special projects.

In the final chapter, "The Library Enters the Twenty-first Century," I discuss the impact of automation on the operations of the library and on the new services it now is able to provide its patrons. Finally, I closed the book as follows: "In 1999, the Corvallis-Benton County Library was named one of

the '100 Great American Public Libraries' and in 2003, it would be named one of the ten best libraries in the U.S. in its population category. . . . As long as it continues to be blessed with outstanding staff and leadership, adequate and stable funding, and wide public support, the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library should continue to be one of the outstanding public libraries in the state and nation" (McClintock 2008, 214-215). 🌿

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Lois Tolbert Sayles, the new librarian at the Arleta Branch of the Library Association of Portland, April 1953. Sayles was the first African-American librarian to work for Multnomah County and became the head of the library at Roosevelt High School. (Courtesy Oregon State University Archives, Urban League of Portland Records.)



# Preparing a History of Your Library

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**by Elizabeth Nielsen**  
Senior Staff Archivist,  
Oregon State University Libraries

## *What is the scope of your library's history?*

Decide on the topics you want to address such as early development and funding of the library, the relationship of the library to local city or county government and perhaps the public schools, early library buildings and facilities, library employees and volunteers, local fundraising efforts, and any special events or programs offered by the library.

## *What is the final product?*

Will it be published in paper form as a brochure, booklet, or full-length chapter book or published online as a PDF or website?

Do you want to include oral histories or handwritten accounts? Choosing topics to research and record will help determine the length and the needed formats required to create a either a complete account or a condensed version of your library's history.

## *What is the deadline for completion or publication?*

Is there a special celebration or event for which you need to have the history completed? This is important for researchers, writers, and event planners. It will also aid in determining the length and format of your final product.

## *What primary sources should be researched?*

Minutes from your library board, city council or county commissioner meetings, and your library fundraising organizations will provide a wealth of historical information. Annual reports and long-range planning documents often provide detailed information about programs, finances, and staffing. Don't forget local newspapers and magazines.

## *Where are the primary sources that document your library's history and are they easily accessible?*

They may be housed within your library, the local historical society, and in city and county government offices. The Oregon State Library, the Oregon State Archives, and regional or state-wide historical societies (such as the Oregon Historical Society) may also have materials pertaining to your library.

## *Are there individuals in your community who have first-hand knowledge of the development of your library?*

These might be library staff and volunteers, library board members, civic leaders, or local government officials. You may want to record oral history interviews with them.

## *What photographs and other visual materials are available?*

Some of these may be on the walls of your library or hidden away in files. Your local or regional historical society is an excellent resource as well as the Oregon State Archives, the Oregon State Library, or special collections of a local university or college. Many library volunteers and staff have personal pictures of libraries that may also be of use.

## *Last, but not least, verify your sources!*



# From Library School to Information Studies:

## Professional Education for Oregon Librarians Then and Now

**by Valery King**  
Associate Professor,  
Instruction and User Services,  
Oregon State University Libraries

and

**by Andrew Cherbas**  
Extension Services Librarian,  
Corvallis-Benton County  
Public Library

and

**by Linda V. Malone**  
Interim Director,  
West Linn Public Library

Library school, information studies, iSchool. Regardless of the moniker it's still the study of librarianship and information. However, significant changes in knowledge delivery methods and learning environments during the last 30 years have affected library education as well as all post-graduate and professional-level education. In addition to changes in delivery mechanisms, the content and scope of library and information studies have expanded. Students' expectations are diverse and dependent on their individual professional career goals.

The following three authors share their individual library and information science education experience. From attending on-campus programs during the advent of technology by Valery King to distance programs using cutting edge technology at home and in the classroom as experienced by Andrew Cherbas and Linda Malone, they discuss how the delivery method, learning environment, and content of their library school experiences prepared them for their professional careers.

### **Valery:**

Once upon a time, there was a library school in Oregon. It was located on the 3rd floor of Chapman Hall at the University of Oregon, where I came in the summer of 1977—just in time to witness its death in 1978.

The University of Oregon had been offering classes in librarianship for school libraries since 1913, and this steadily expanded over the years. As the School's last Dean, Herman L. Totten, outlined in his article about the school in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (1977), the Department of English began offering a certificate in public school librarianship in the 1930s. The program moved to the School of Education in 1948, and by 1960 was a depart-

ment within Education offering graduate level courses leading to an M.A. or M.S. with a major in librarianship. A separate School of Librarianship was established in 1966 and received ALA accreditation in 1968. In those ten years between 1968 and 1978, the school awarded approximately 990 students the Master of Library Science degree.

At the end of the 1970s library science was just beginning its transition to information science. Like students today we studied cataloging, reference, and collection development, but the tools were different. Cataloging students created records on catalog cards. Filing rules were very important. Before the advent of electronic resources we studied lists of important reference books, and learned how to use them. Our information management classes did not include databases. We studied classification and subject heading systems, but not MARC records or metadata. There were no courses in web design, information technology, or virtual reference.

But students and faculty were aware of coming changes. To help prepare for it, a class in computer science was strongly recommended for all students, where we discussed how libraries and our work would change when catalogs were online. We created a simple program in Basic, using a keypunch machine to record it onto punch cards to run on a mainframe computer (I never did get mine to run properly). Since no library in Eugene was yet using OCLC, classes visited Willamette University library to observe online cataloging accomplished on large dedicated computers with tiny green screens—resulting in shipments of catalog cards!

Why was the program eliminated at the very edge of the profound changes automation was to bring to libraries and librarianship? Several reasons were cited by



University of Oregon administration: declining enrollment, too many unemployed librarians in the state, the existence of other library schools in neighboring states, the University's need to save money in a recession (*Library Journal* 1977, 1439) But universities collectively did not predict the shift in the profession nor recognize the implications, as the closure of Oregon's library school was only the first of more than a dozen such closures across the country over the next decade (Paris 1990, 38-42).

All the students who started the program at UO were allowed to finish, but the closure of the school was a depressing blow and many were left wondering about the value of their degree when the school was gone. With the exception of a few media specialist programs, Oregon was left without a library program and Oregon librarians without a local option for continuing education. Not until the advent of the Internet and of distance education programs such as Emporia State in the 1990s were Oregonians able to obtain a masters degree in library science without having to leave the state.

### **Andrew:**

When I applied to Syracuse University's distance learning Information Studies program I was still uncertain what the demands would look and feel like. Becoming a librarian seemed like a nice fit for my information hunger and existence as a generalist. As I filled out the forms and sent in the check it was not without trepidation, but I wanted my MLS degree and at least on paper, it looked like the best choice for my circumstances at the time. In 2000, I was not in a position to move from Corvallis, Oregon, where I enjoyed my job as an Internet sales representative. Syracuse offered the program I wanted, and it promised to allow me to stay employed, and in Oregon.

As I look back on my graduate school experience, I appreciate how effectively the program at Syracuse prepared me for my work as the Extension Services Librarian at the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library. The Extension Services position in Corvallis demands an open mind and the ability to adjust on the fly because no day is the same. I have my hand in a little bit of everything that the branch libraries do on a daily basis. This flexible and diverse work environment has been a fantastic fit for my career expectations as a Librarian.

While at Syracuse my main tract of study focused on technology but the program encouraged a general background in all areas. The professors pushed hard, demanding creative and forward thinking solutions, and the coursework required I use the latest technologies, not just learn about them.

I was confident of my technological abilities when I became an MLS student, but Syracuse demanded more. The program was a generalist's dream, exposing me to a variety of emerging technologies, some library specific and some not. Creative projects were promoted and encouraged, but with the caveat that they be tailored to explore how the work applied to the library profession. From that point on, I looked at technology completely differently.

I learned quickly that it was easy to get lost in the technological "realm of possibility", and that creativity alone was not enough. For positive assimilation to occur I learned the value of identifying a focus and a direction early in the process. Today, when reviewing and working with technology, my evaluation starts with a very simple question; how will this specific technology help me do a better job? Often the answer is 'it won't', but without the experience at Syracuse, I would never have asked the question.

When the new Harney County Library was built in 1969, the librarian was delighted to move. Prior to that, the library was in city hall and the aroma of baked beans cooked by the prisoners in the jail downstairs was overpowering and their banging on the pipes and singing could not be shushed!

—Cheryl Hancock,  
Harney County Library



Many people are fearful of what can be perceived as today's technological minefield. It is hard to let the technology sleep. It has become more and more difficult to step away from the screen, turn the switch to the off position, and unplug. I am a better librarian when I take time to separate myself from the computer, unplug, and go for a mountain bike ride or a trail run. Turning off the technology keeps my fingers dirty and helps me understand how new technologies such as Twitter, Facebook, Xbox live, blogs, wikis, and the like, can have a positive impact on libraries.

Distance learning is ideal for people who thrive in a flexible and independent learning environment. But it is not the right fit for everyone. Finding the correct balance between school and your personal and professional life can be problematic. Because the classroom door is always open, it is easy to slip into using every available moment to check classroom message boards or research your latest assignment. The ability to turn off the computer and call it a night is essential for the distance student who still maintains other responsibilities, like work and family. To be successful in this type of program, establishing balance is a must.

**Linda:**  
Acceptance into Emporia State University's SLIM-II distance program in the summer of 1997 struck me as a gift. I had been working in libraries for years, but had never been in a position to at-

tend a regular, campus-based MLIS program. Now, a program was coming to me! I was so infused with enthusiasm I almost floated into the orientation.

It didn't take me long to realize that while my enthusiasm was great, the main ingredient for success in the program would be discipline. The program was well-structured, but I needed to schedule the time and make sure I had the necessary hardware and software to produce the work.

While distance programs can be a godsend, they are just that – distant. Intensive weekend classes were followed by weeks of work done in isolation, at least physically. Yes, there was significant electronic presence, but no joint study sessions at the university library or coffee seminars where we could meet face to face. We were essentially on our own.

While pursuing my degree, I made a critical decision to continue working at my local library as a page and then a circulation clerk. Without library exposure, I would have been operating in a vacuum except for those intensive weekends at the PSU campus, which, by nature, existed in a rather rarified theatre.



Klamath County bookmobile on rounds, 1932. A librarian helps a child choose a book from the Klamath County Free Library's bookmobile as the bookmobile makes its rounds on snowy roads. Bookshelves are visible through the open back doors. (Courtesy Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library, OSL0007.)



Shortly before my graduation, I realized I hadn't developed a career path beyond the vague idea of becoming a "reference librarian." I further realized that selecting an independent study course over a practicum was a mistake. While interesting and academic, independent study didn't prepare me for entry into the job market. I needed the hands-on, real-time, experience of a practicum and I needed it in a hurry.

When I was offered the directorship of the La Conner Regional Library in Washington State a few months after graduation, I jumped at the opportunity. Managing a small library with five employees, a very involved board, and a large and active Friends group provided me the opportunity to develop practical, operational skills, presented challenges and experiences, and helped me further crystallize my career path towards a management position in a larger library system.

This experience also painfully exposed the weaknesses in my MLIS management training and preparation. I read all the management books I could, attended continuing education classes and conferences, and networked with other library professionals.

I joined the Washington Library Association (WLA) and volunteered for every steering committee, board, and planning group I could fit into my busy life. These relationships were invaluable in developing my networking skills as well as providing regular opportunities for learning from more experienced librarians.

The local politics imbued in the governmental entities under which libraries exist are daunting at best. I realized I was in no way trained or prepared to attend city council meetings. Again, my MLIS education did not prepare me for the importance of managing the inner workings of community politics. If a class in the politics of local and state governments is not part of your MLIS program's profile, request it, or at the very least, educate yourself. Attend the public city council meetings and local library board meetings in your community. Familiarize yourself with the codes regulating libraries and with the structure of your local library's fiscal agent. It's also important to recognize and develop critical relationships with local community groups such as the rotary club or chamber of commerce. A network of local, invested stakeholders is essential for fundraising and future library support.

Much of what I gleaned from my first director position in Washington prepared me for my next position as the director of the Garden Home Library, a small special-district library in the Portland metro area. One of my first major tasks as director was to oversee the library building's ren-



Snowbound bookmobile at Sprague River, 1932. The librarian of the Klamath County Free Library's bookmobile shovels snow. (Courtesy Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library, OSL0008)





Lake County Library in Lakeview, 1954. This interior view of the Lake County Library shows the children's area in the foreground with adult books and reference in the background. (Courtesy Oregon State Archives, Oregon State Library, OS10018.)

The Oregon Library Association was founded in 1940 at Timberline Lodge.

—OLA Web site

ovation and remodeling enhancements that were to be completed during open hours. I had no practical or educational background in the area of library building construction. I spent hours learning all I could with a very patient and knowledgeable contractor and attended every meeting as the work progressed.

Developing an understanding of the consortium operations of a library was another critical element missing from my MLIS education and previous training. Managing a library within a consortium is quite different from operating an independent library. Working with other branch and department managers requires finesse, self-awareness, team-building and communication skills. Again, I learned on the job, joined associations, volunteered for committees, and ran for board positions. I did everything I could to garner the insight and skills I needed to help me be a better manager in a larger consortium environment.

The 2004 PNLA Leadership Institute held near Dumas Bay, Washington, provided me with one of my most significant and rewarding continuing education experi-

ences. Immersion in this intense week-long seminar developed my skills in personnel interactions, decision-making, and communication and offered an unparalleled opportunity to learn from and network with professional colleagues from libraries around the Pacific Northwest and Canada.

Gradually my library experiences, along with my MLIS education, began to coalesce into my career as a library manager. Looking back at the program, I should have paid more attention to management issues, requested more management and government-type classes, and developed a practicum to enhance my education. I realize that my own lack of self-direction during my MLIS education and my inability to find or request a mentor left me to develop essential skills in creative ways and on-the-fly.

For the last five years I have worked as the Head of Adult Services for a mid-sized library in the Portland metro area and am currently the Interim Director. I still face personnel challenges, budget shortfalls, and delicate political negotiations. And I still fall flat on my face sometimes! But I continue to network, volunteer, get involved, and pay attention to little details while keeping my eye on the big picture. My MLIS education gave me a very strong foundation, one on which I need to continually build in order to stay at the top of my game and to continue my pursuit of excellence. 🌿

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