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Open Libraries: More than Just Open Books or Open Doors



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Upcoming Issue

Winter 2010
*Doing More With Less:
Creative Strategies in
the New Economy*

Open Libraries: More than Just Open Books or Open Doors

Rachel Bridgewater

Cover image:
Estuary Boardwalk (2010)
Gary Sharp, Director,
North Bend Public Library



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Introduction

I am sure most of you have heard the catchphrase “Open books, open minds.” Perhaps you have seen it on a bookmark or hosted a program around the theme. Library staff pride ourselves on opening people up to information in whatever its form, whether by exposing them to an information resource or simply by ensuring that our doors (physical or digital) are open.

In this issue, you will discover that there is more to openness in libraries than open books and open doors. Surely we want people to open up to the wealth of knowledge libraries possess. But to fully open our libraries requires us to open the processes, policies, and tools that enable us to provide said knowledge. The authors in this issue discuss just that.

The issue starts with a library’s most basic principle: customer service. Jane Salisbury beautifully describes the importance of being open to the myriad people who come through our doors. Her argument is supported by Carolee Hirsch’s sketches of the diverse patrons who may frequent your library. We move from openness to the public to openness among staff with Carol McGeehon’s article about how implementing a staff-wide wiki at the Douglas County Library System improved communication.

The next two articles explore open source software. Authors discuss how this alternative to proprietary software benefits their libraries. Sean Park and I detail how switching to the open source operating system Linux has allowed us to improve public computing at Coos County Libraries. And in a project eagerly watched by many in Oregon’s library community, Beth Longwell of the Sage Library System writes about its switch to the Evergreen open source integrated library system.

Rachel Bridgewater takes us from openness of information tools to openness of the information itself with her article about the free culture movement. Free culture touches on a topic near and dear to our hearts: copyright and information policy, and the need for more balanced laws on these issues.

One aspect of free culture—open access—is addressed by Kim Read. She shows how library consortia have been instrumental in promoting open access publishing and the importance of that commitment in this era of skyrocketing journal costs. With open access also comes an opening of the processes by which scholarship, and specifically science, is done. So says Hope Leman in her discussion of how science is changing, as both the processes and the results it produces becoming more accessible.

Finally, the issue ends with a pair of articles on open government, a topic that has received plenty of press lately. Patrice McDermott and Roberta Richards show how government policymaking is opening up at both the national and state levels, and how critical it is that we continue to press officials to shine light on how our laws and regulations are made. This government openness benefits libraries directly, as Ann Reed and Jane Scheppke demonstrate. Their article about Oregon’s Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant program shows how libraries and patrons throughout the state profit from the openness of the LSTA program.

As those technical geeks among us might be wont to say, we also “eat our own dog food” in this issue: all of the authors have agreed to license their articles under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license, including any original images within the articles. This means that future content creators are free to reuse, remix, and build upon the articles without the authors’ permission provided they abide by the license terms. For more details, check out Rachel’s article about free culture.

Thank you to all of the authors for their fantastic contributions to this issue. We hope that you find this issue informative and intellectually-stimulating. Most of all, though, we hope that the articles inspire you to find ways to make your own libraries even more open.

Open to the Public

Main article by

Jane Salisbury

*Supervisor,
Library Outreach Services
Multnomah County Library*

Sidebar by

Carolee Hirsch

*Adult Services Librarian,
Eugene Public Library*


An attitude and practice of openness is generally a given in public libraries, even if our rosy view of our social role is not quite accurate. We like to see libraries as the great stepping stone for immigrants in the early 20th century, even as they were still closed to people of color in parts of the country. Even now, we have some distance to go to live up to the ideals we were taught in library school. As Marcia Nauratil (1985) writes, “While the doors of the public library, like the park’s gates, are not closed in the face of any citizen seeking entrance, certain segments have traditionally found the library unwelcoming and indifferent to their needs” (p. 12). As the world of library materials and services grows ever more varied and complicated, we need to strive to open even more generously to our patrons, and so banish that lack of welcome and sense of indifference.

My own sense of what libraries can do to communicate openness has grown to include acceptance and welcoming to patrons of the kind that Carolee Hirsch describes in the sidebars to this article, as well as cultivating an understanding of patrons who encounter daunting barriers to library services. Although the bedrock of openness in public


libraries is a compassionate, unbiased attitude, we can also write it into our policies and make some breathing room for people in unusual circumstances. In opening library services to people with, for example, brain injuries, agoraphobia, inability to read, memory, hearing and visual deficits, and confusion that sometimes comes with age, we at Multnomah County Library have developed policies and practices that support us well in serving people who desperately want to read and participate in their communities but who face serious obstacles.

In Library Outreach Services at Multnomah County, there are several policies in place that give our more vulnerable patrons that breathing room. For patrons who are homebound or use our lobby services at retirement homes, we have longer circulation periods, easy renewals (unless there are holds on an item), no fines, and a general routine of managing accounts and hand-holding that helps patrons through their concerns. Many of our patrons have memory problems or confusion stemming from dementia or injury, but they are still able to enjoy reading or watching movies. As Outreach Supervisor, I overhear conversations everyday in our little cubicle farm in which staff reassure patrons that they are not to worry, they will not be charged, and that all is well.


These practices can be part of a library of any size and do not depend on budget. Our library has recently set new service principles that reflect this flexibility and eagerness to accommodate. One of the service principles reads, “We provide each patron with choices in products and services. We minimize the number of barriers and maximize the number of options.”



Dudley’s brain works slowly. When he attended the beginners computer class, a patient volunteer was available to help him work on the first step as the rest of the class moved forward. Dudley took the class again. And again. Between classes, he came in to struggle at a computer with what he had learned so far. After a year or so, he moved on to the Internet class. The next year was the e-mail class. Now he is learning genealogy.



Barbara was frustrated. She just arrived in town, was homeless, and needed Internet access to connect with her community because she was deaf. And she did not realize how LOUD her voice was. We have several options to give Internet access to people without addresses or a library card. Trying to explain them to an impatient person is difficult; doing so by writing notes to a time bomb was even more challenging. Our most compassionate librarian and a Technical Services staff member who knows American Sign Language communicated with Barbara. Now she uses the Internet every day, greeting us with a cheerful (still loud) hello before settling down to her business.



To my nose, Chester always emitted an odor of dehydrated chicken noodle soup. He spent hours everyday with his nose nearly touching the monitor screen of the adaptive technology computer set at its largest font size. One day, he positively beamed as he told me that he had finally been able to find the information he needed about treatment options for his vision problems.

As we move further into the world of digital reading and listening, I have watched outreach staff find ways to open that world to our patrons. The key is having faith that the brain-injured or very old patron is capable of learning. We have a patron who reminds me of Dudley (see sidebar): she is brain-injured and homebound, but I have listened to one of our staff patiently walk her through the steps of downloading and using OverDrive (the downloadable audiobook and e-book service) to listen to audiobooks on her computer. The staff member speaks slowly, pauses, and repeats; the patron has learned how to do it, with tutelage, and is thrilled to listen to these books since she has great difficulty reading.

Another way to open the doors wider to your community is to look around and see what is needed, even if it does not seem perfectly aligned with your sense of what a library offers. When we began anew to provide adult literacy services a few years ago, we looked at how to support immigrants, beyond the collections in our libraries and outreach already being done. Citizenship classes, surprisingly, were not being offered consistently in the County. Now we have 14 classes a year, full of zealous converts to the free and open American public library.

The same can be said of our Talk Time groups, which give English learners a chance to practice English casually. Having watched a devout Somali woman observing Ramadan explain why she cannot partake of the beautiful pastries to the glamorous Mexican



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Aaron has worn the same torn trousers and tired sport coat as long as I can remember. He also has an unsightly growth on his face. He used to wander the library all day, complaining to himself and avoiding eye contact. However, a few years ago, he learned to use the computer and search the Internet. He also reserves time on what may be the last existing typewriter in Eugene. Gradually, he spends more time talking to staff members than to himself. One day he brought a list of poetry journals in which he was published before being afflicted with mental problems. Recently, he told us some of his work has been accepted by another respected journal. And he asked for help to locate his last known relative, hoping to reestablish contact before he dies of his terminal illness.



Like clockwork, we can count on Edgar arriving just fifteen minutes before closing on Monday, and settling down with a week's worth of newspapers. When we repeatedly reminded him that the library was closing, we could almost see him dig in his heels as he scowled at us. After a few months, we started ignoring him. A minute or two before closing, he would hoist himself out of his chair and put away the newspapers as he left. Then I started saying "Hello, how are you?" as he came in. He still comes in just fifteen minutes before closing, and still leaves just a minute or two before closing, but now he says "Have a nice day!" as he goes out the door.

woman who brought them, I understand the power of opening the doors and inviting in all. These kinds of programs say, "You are welcome. We are open." These newcomers find a friend, and so do we, as they become library lovers.

Our culture stereotypes libraries as tightly controlled, with eagle-eyed overseers ready to cite rigid policy and procedure at the merest suggestion of deviation. We know that is ridiculously outdated, but we still have to work every day to squash that assumption. Too, we hold an ideal within our profession that we have not really achieved. We must telegraph the message that we are open to people, whoever they are and however we find them, and that we want to find a way, any way, to bring them the riches of the library. 🌿

Names and identifying information in this article and sidebars have been changed to protect patron privacy.

References

Nauratil, Marcia J (1985). *Public libraries and nontraditional clientele: The politics of special services*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.



A Wiki Way of Communication

by Carol McGeehon
*Technical Support Manager,
Douglas County Library System*

In 2007, the Douglas County Library System began using wiki software to create an electronic depository of documents. The wiki has grown into a communications hub for the library system. We currently use the wiki to disseminate information, create and store electronic documents, track problem tickets for technology and cataloging questions, host staff discussions around various topics, summarize conferences and workshops, and track usage of equipment, vehicles, and meeting rooms. The wiki is open to all library staff from any staff computer throughout the library system. Basic tutorials on using the software are available to staff as well.

For those of you less familiar with the concept of a wiki, it is a Web site that allows users to create, edit, and organize pages with a WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor and other content management tools. You do not need programming skills to use a wiki. We use the TikiWiki software for our staff wiki. TikiWiki (<http://tikiwiki.org>) is one of the many available wiki software packages and comes with a variety of functions, from wiki pages to forums. The software is an open source project first developed in 2002 and has a group of 200 volunteer developers actively working on new features and fixing problems.

The majority of our procedures are on the wiki and available for everyone to view and edit. We began by allowing everyone to edit documents, and it has worked well for our library. For example, I can create a draft procedure page and delegate the testing and finishing of the procedure. Or I can delegate the entire procedure to someone, watch while it is being created, and later add to it.

We create documentation as we need it, update it instantly, and easily remove material when it becomes dated. We can monitor pages to see who edits what portion of the pages. If someone makes a mistake, we can go back to the page before it was edited by looking at its editing history. This function serves as an instant backup copy.

Anyone can monitor the page for changes. For example, in the circulation procedure manual, branch staff can monitor any pages that interest them. When changes are made, they are alerted via email. Each division manager is also able to use the wiki in different ways, allowing for adaptation to the communication methods of each manager and their staff.

This past year, we started using a table of contents function that allows pages to be organized by subject or function, providing easier navigation of the wiki. For example, this spring we created a group of wiki pages called “public computing” and gathered together information on our public computers (see Figure 1). We also gathered pages on Library2Go, Cybraryn, known problems with our public PC hardware and software, etc. This table of contents provides a first stop information source on common tech support questions and gives staff the ability to find answers before they report problems to technical support staff.

All of this information is linked to a set of wiki home pages for our branches and central library. Once at the home page, staff are only one or two clicks away from the information. This functionality allows us to think of these home pages as central repositories of information, reducing the amount of time someone needs to find a page. The wiki can also be searched directly by keyword or phrase. In the past three years, we have created several hundred wiki pages, and finding one with a common word becomes laborious. Again, the table of contents structure can be monitored by staff for updates.

Our library director uses an internal blog on the wiki to disseminate information on the budget, policies, and rumor control. Library staff can comment on any of his blog entries and interact with him. This provides him with a platform to test new ideas among staff and publish ongoing information about next year’s budget reduction. It provides direct access to





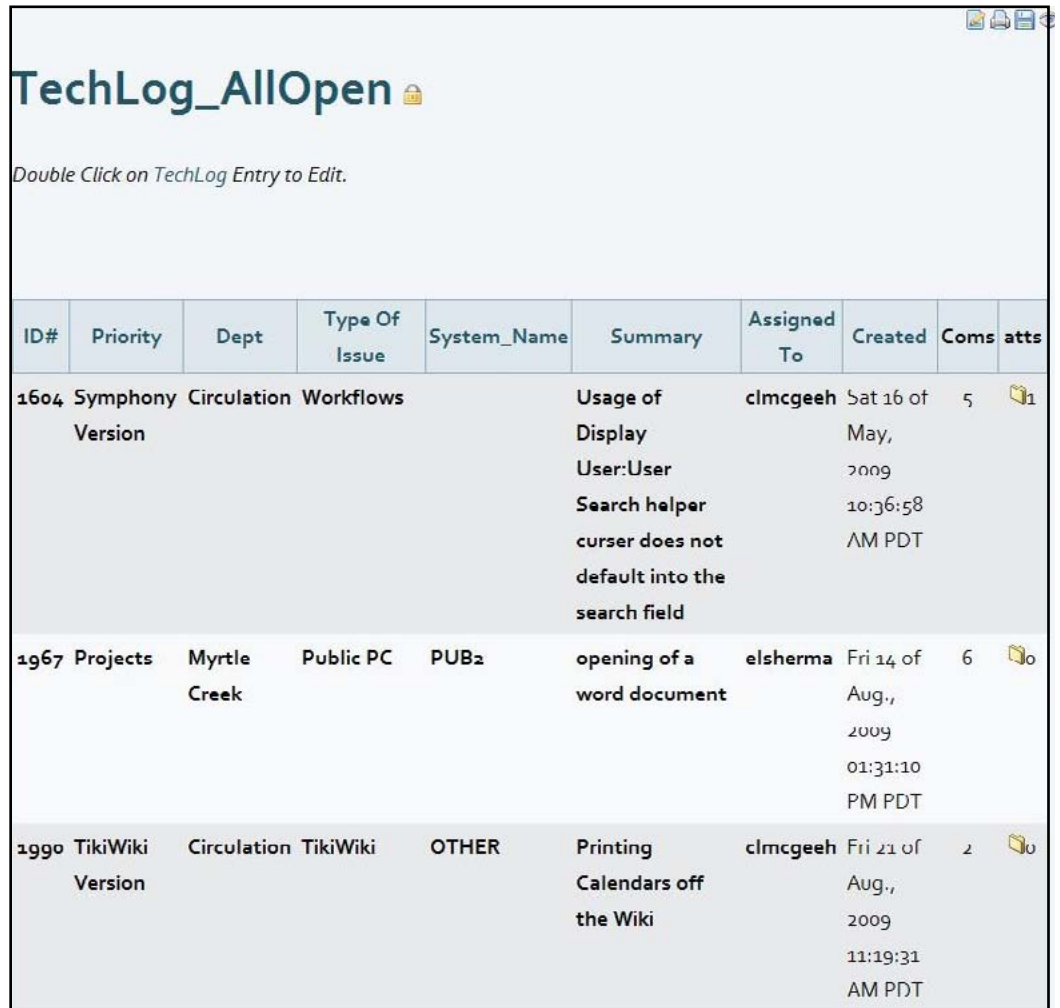
Figure 1. The table of contents for the public computing section of the wiki.


the library director and gives him the ability to communicate instantly with us.

We provide discussion forums on a variety of topics, such as the public catalog, cost-saving ideas, and staff training. I use the public catalog forum to discuss new ideas and provide information about changes in functionality. Our "Economies" forum gives staff a place to suggest how to save money or ask questions, such as whether turning out the lights saves money. It also provides a place to post links to information as we find it. People are still able to watch the conversation if they prefer not to participate. Unfortunately, the discussion forums are not used as much as they could be.

One of our more popular functions is the tracker. This is essentially a spreadsheet function with an HTML form to log technology-related problems (see Figure 2). The form gathers information from library staff about the problem, its priority, where it is happening, and information on who logged the issue. The form is programmed to pull information about the submitter from the wiki login, including username, group to which they belong, and email address. Any notes or questions are sent automatically back to the person who logged the question, creating a conversation about the issue. The tracker function allows us to know which problems are outstanding, for how long, to whom it is assigned, and any notes we wish to keep. When the problem is solved, we then have a support database of open and closed logs to search using the basic wiki search function.





TechLog_AllOpen 

Double Click on TechLog Entry to Edit.




ID#	Priority	Dept	Type Of Issue	System_Name	Summary	Assigned To	Created	Coms	atts
1604	Symphony Version	Circulation	Workflows		Usage of Display User:User Search helper curser does not default into the search field	clmcgeeh	Sat 16 of May, 2009 10:36:58 AM PDT	5	 1
1967	Projects	Myrtle Creek	Public PC	PUB2	opening of a word document	elsherma	Fri 14 of Aug., 2009 01:31:10 PM PDT	6	 0
1990	TikiWiki Version	Circulation	TikiWiki	OTHER	Printing Calendars off the Wiki	clmcgeeh	Fri 21 of Aug., 2009 11:19:31 AM PDT	2	 0

Figure 2. Open technology trouble tickets as seen on the wiki.

We have a default wiki page which everyone who logs into their account sees first. This page is used to provide system-wide information not provided in the library director's blog. Here we post information on scheduled downtime for computers, new services being added, grants awarded, safety information, and more. The person posting the system-wide information can choose to send an all staff email alert when posting.


There is also a calendar function within the wiki that we use to track equipment loans to staff, vehicle usage, meeting rooms, and vacations. For example, we have a staff laptop and projector. Staff can go to the calendar for equipment and sign up for the laptop and projector on a specific day and time. Tech support staff monitor the calendar and receive an email with information on where and when the equipment is needed. They then either set it up or ship it out to a branch library.




This year we automated the leave request for sick and vacation time (see Figure 3). Once a leave request is approved the information is posted to the leave calendar by administrative staff, and we can see who is out on any given day.






Leave Request Form

LEAVE REQUEST FORM

Dept_Supervisor * None 

Start Date * January  01  2010 

Dates of absence. If the request is for part of a day, please explain in the Note box below.

End Date * January  01  2010 


Sick ☐

Vacation ☐

Floating Holiday ☐

OFLA/FMLA ☐

(Check here if this request is for OFLA or FMLA leave.)

Other leave 

Note (Optional) *You may provide additional information, such as absence breakdown (3 hours vacation, 2 hours comp, etc.), or times of absence for partial days, or coverage.*

You may provide additional information, such as absence breakdown (3 hours vacation, 2 hours comp, etc.), or times of absence for partial days, or coverage.

Submit Absence Form *Fields marked with a * are mandatory.*

Figure 3. Staff can request sick and vacation leave on the wiki.

I've left the best for last. Our wiki provides the user with a personalization feature named MyTiki, empowering everyone to create a personal wiki site. You can create bookmarks and add additional functionality, including your own color theme.

Over the past three years, as we use and experiment with the wiki, we find better ways to communicate with our coworkers. Responsibility for communication is shifting, and employees no longer need to wait for information to come from their supervisors; they can find it for themselves, and help others find it. We provide the tools for them to create information, and this is the true power of the wiki. It provides better management of staff time, changing work processes throughout the organization. It allows more delegation and acceptance of responsibility for staff. And it provides a means to see how staff are contributing to the organization.

The wiki is a public place, and many of us are not used to having our information reside in an open environment even though we work in a public organization. It is a good first step in social networking for anyone still sitting on the sidelines. 🌿



Free as in Internet:

Using Linux and Open Source Software on Public Workstations

by Matthew “Buzzy” Nielsen

*Assistant Library Director,
North Bend Public Library*

and

by Sean Park

*Network Administrator,
Coos County Library Service
District*

Public workstations in libraries are generally dominated by software from two companies: Microsoft or Apple. Every once in a while, you might see Mozilla Firefox, but Internet stations still predominantly run Windows or Mac OS. Debate about Windows versus Mac aside, all of these computers share a characteristic: they are proprietary.

There is an alternative. Public libraries in Coos County have migrated our public computers to the open source operating system Linux and other open source software. This change has saved us money, staff time, and ultimately resulted in better service for patrons.

What is Open Source Software?

First, we digress briefly for some explanation. Open source software (OSS), sometimes called free and open source software (FOSS), are programs where the underlying source code is published and freely available. People are able to use, share, and modify the software as they see fit. Ironically, such freedom is allowed through use of copyright law. OSS is released under licenses, the most popular of which is the GNU General Public License (GPL), that delineate these freedoms, putting OSS squarely within the “free culture” movement. Often, one of the terms is that modifications to source code must be released under a similar license.

Because of this openness, OSS is developed differently from proprietary software. Often, OSS is designed by geographically-dispersed groups of dedicated developers rather than one company, a quality greatly facilitated by the Internet. While some may scoff at this development model, OSS includes several reliable and well-known programs: Linux (operating system), Android (Linux-based mobile phone operating system), Mozilla Firefox (Web browser), WordPress (content management system), Apache (Web server), OpenOffice (office suite), and more.

OSS in Coos County

Frustrated with the slow speed, burgeoning trouble tickets, and security lapses of Windows XP, Coos County’s Network Administrator Sean Park began experimenting with open source workstations in early 2008. Library staff were pleased with the speed, stability, and features of these workstations, so individual libraries in our federated district started migrating to Linux. See Delozier (2009) for an excellent explanation of Linux written specifically for libraries.

Currently, seven of our eight public libraries use Linux-based public computers, approximately 90 workstations. Increasingly, staff workstations are being switched over as well. The software on our workstations breaks down as follows:

- Operating system: Ubuntu Linux 10.04 “Lucid Lynx” (<http://www.ubuntu.com>)
- Internet: Firefox 3.6 (<http://www.firefox.com>)
- Office suite: OpenOffice 3.2 (<http://www.openoffice.org>)
- Image editor: GIMP 2.6 (<http://www.gimp.org>)
- Media player: VLC 1.0 (<http://www.videolan.org/vlc>)
- Other: Brasero (disc burning), F-Spot (photo manager), PiTiVi (video editor), Simple Scan (document scanning)
- Proprietary software: Adobe Reader, Flash, Google Earth

Much of this software may be familiar; OpenOffice, Firefox, GIMP, and VLC run on Windows and Mac OS as well. The relative speed, reliability, and small CPU footprint of



this software has enabled the district to offer many software options for patrons that previously may have been too expensive or insecure.

Reactions

Anecdotally, reactions to the switch from patrons and staff have been remarkably ... absent. Only occasionally do we get questions or comments indirectly related to our changeover: "Why don't you have Word?" "Wow, your computers are really fast!" or "What system are you using? It doesn't look like Windows."

The lack of positive or negative comments is likely because most computer users are doing simple things: checking email or social networking sites, reading news, applying for jobs, writing letters, uploading photos. These functions work similarly no matter the operating system, so little adaptation is needed.

We have made efforts to help patrons familiar with other operating systems, however. All software is given generic names: "Internet" for Firefox, "Word processor" for OpenOffice Writer. GNOME, the window manager used on our workstations, also looks and acts similarly to Windows XP. Patrons familiar with Windows XP would likely have more difficulty adapting to Windows 7 and Microsoft Office 2007/2010 than a Linux-based operating system running GNOME and OpenOffice.

Why Did We Switch?

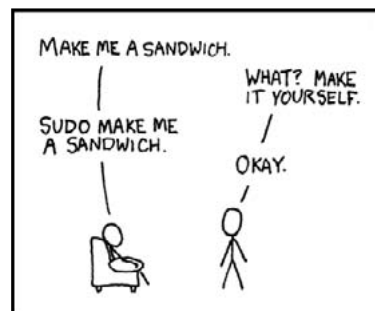
The district switched from proprietary to OSS for four primary reasons: cost, security, efficiency, and philosophy.

Proprietary software requires licenses. Licenses cost money. On Newegg.com, a popular technology vendor, licenses for Windows 7 Professional cost over \$250, while Microsoft Office 2010 professional costs over \$400. Certainly libraries are able to get better deals than this through educational discounts and programs such as TechSoup and the Organization for Educational Technology and Curriculum (OETC). Still, license costs are significant.

OSS generally does not require paid licenses. Most of the software we use on our public computers is free, to libraries and patrons alike. North Bend Public Library recently purchased seven additional public workstations. We estimate that we were able to purchase an additional two computers by using OSS. License savings translated directly into more service for patrons.

But free does not imply a lesser product, leading to our second reason for switching: security. Linux is inherently more secure than Windows or Mac OS. By default, users are

given fewer administrative privileges. Applications are more isolated from the operating system, making security failures in particular programs, such as Flash, less likely to compromise your entire system. There is no need for third-party antivirus or firewall programs (another savings in licensing costs). And finally, security updates are pushed out to Linux-based systems quickly and continuously, a benefit of the community-oriented development model of OSS.



Security in Linux: It's that cool.

<http://xkcd.com/149/>



Another consideration when the district moved to Linux was efficiency. At the time, we had older hardware designed for Windows 2000. These computers were starting to choke on the increasing requirements of Windows XP. Linux, by nature, uses hardware more efficiently. Because it has a “lighter” approach to managing applications, it uses processing power and RAM more efficiently. Thus, it runs noticeably faster on older hardware. When upgrading to newer hardware, the speed increase is even more evident.

Finally, and perhaps most broadly, OSS matches the overall philosophy of the public library. As the GNU Project, a pioneer of the open source movement, states, “‘Free software’ is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of ‘free’ as in ‘free speech,’ not as in ‘free beer’” (2010). While much open source (and proprietary) software is *gratis*, that is, has no price, free software is also *libre*: open to all for all purposes. We want the information in our libraries to be freely available to patrons. Why shouldn’t the software we use to deliver that information be free as well?

Free as in Kittens

In addition to being free as in beer and speech, OSS is also popularly known as being “free as in kittens.” That is, getting the kitten is free, but you have to care for it. There is little evidence indicating that mature open source applications are more expensive to maintain than proprietary counterparts. But using software that is not considered mainstream has other, non-monetary costs. While we have a smoothly-running system now, we ran into some issues.

One of the most difficult challenges was printing. We had several instances where jobs would take a long time to print, or be dropped altogether. This problem ultimately boiled down to support: some hardware simply is not as well-supported on Linux. Drivers for hardware may be underdeveloped or absent. Because of our experience with a particularly fiendish color laser printer, we now carefully research compatibility before purchasing new hardware.

Another issue was PDF files; some files would not open in the default PDF viewer in Ubuntu, others would not print, and PDFs with fillable fields could not be saved or printed. We ultimately found an undesirable but necessary solution to these problems: using the proprietary Linux version of Adobe Reader.

Flash, the technology behind such sites as YouTube and pogo.com, occasionally proved problematic. Web designers who use Flash sometimes have their sites ask for specific versions of it, such as the Windows version. If your system lacks that particular version, the object will not open. This poses a problem for Linux and Mac users alike. Fortunately, Web developers are becoming better at considering multiple systems and Web browsers when designing sites. This problem is declining, and we have not had reports of Flash problems for several months. Moving to more open standards for online videos and games will further alleviate this issue.

A deal-killer for many of you, our Linux-based system currently also means we lack time- and print-management software; we still use the tried-and-true clipboard method of computer scheduling. We have investigated options, including Linux-based public desktops provided by Useful (<http://www.userful.com>). Begg de Groff (2009) details another library system’s experience with a similar company, Groovix. Ultimately, we decided to keep control of our overall software environment and are researching other options: Libki (<http://libki.org/>) and powerline (<http://code.google.com/p/powerline/>).



Compatibility

Our final and most recurring issue is compatibility. Most of the world unfortunately does not use Linux or OSS. File formats, Web technologies, and even fonts can pose problems, chiefly that they will not open on Linux-based systems. There are several workarounds for such issues.

First and foremost is OpenOffice. This powerful office suite enables us to open a variety of file formats: Microsoft Office (including 2007 and 2010), Microsoft Works, WordPerfect, and others. This wide-ranging ability to open files is one of OpenOffice's benefits over proprietary alternatives. To alleviate potential compatibility issues when patrons transfer documents to other systems, we set OpenOffice to save in Microsoft Office 2003 formats (.doc, .xls, etc.) by default. We have also installed the proprietary Microsoft fonts (Times New Roman, Verdana, etc.), for which we have licenses, to ensure formatting continuity. Unfortunately, we do not have the default Microsoft Office 2007/2010 fonts installed (Calibri, Cambria, etc.), which does result in some formatting issues.

Another simple solution is a Firefox add-on called the User Agent Switcher. Every Web browser identifies itself to a Web site. The browser will say "I'm Firefox 3.x," "I'm Safari 4.x," etc. Some Web sites ask for a specific browser (such as Internet Explorer). The User Agent Switcher allows Firefox to "pretend" it is another browser. Instead of saying "I'm Firefox 3.x," it will say, "I'm Internet Explorer 8.x." For many sites seeking a specific browser, changing Firefox's user agent enables them to work.

For files that will not open at all in Linux, we have two solutions: Wine (no, not the alcoholic variety) (<http://www.winehq.org>) and VirtualBox (<http://www.virtualbox.org>). Wine allows other operating systems to emulate Windows, allowing it to run Windows-only applications. On older hardware, we use Wine to run Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office 2003.

More advanced hardware, particularly that with dual- or quad-core processors and plenty of RAM, can take advantage of VirtualBox (VB). VB allows you to run an operating system within another operating system. That is, you can be logged in to, for example, Ubuntu but open a session of Windows XP. Running VB can drain system resources, so it does require more current computers. Still, because VB runs the full version of another operating system, it avoids problems experienced by Wine or Linux-native applications.

Since we still have Windows XP licenses, we legally can use VB for obstinate compatibility issues. Currently, we have an instance of Windows XP installed on our Linux-based machines that includes Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office 2003. This is a particularly important solution for those Web sites that require Internet Explorer and ActiveX. As with Flash, however, it is becoming less necessary to use VirtualBox as cross-platform compatibility improves with documents and Web sites.

Recommendations

Despite some challenges, we have not regretted our decision to switch to OSS. The change has resulted in a system that is faster, cheaper, more stable, and with more features. We have adopted the "perpetual beta" ethos: we constantly test new software, seeking ways to improve our already well-functioning setup. That being said, we hope that other libraries seeking to make their computers more open can learn from our experiences. In addition to the challenges mentioned previously, we recommend the following:



- Make sure you have an open-minded staff. Many of the difficulties that will arise fall on frontline staff. Ensure that they are willing to learn new software and go through a few rough spots as you iron out kinks.
- Try (or at least research) hardware before you buy it or use it. Some hardware does not play well with Linux. Reading customer comments on tech Web sites helps immensely. Many Linux distributions also include live CDs that allow you to try the operating system without having to install it.
- Help your patrons by making things look familiar. Linux is very customizable. Lay out your desktop and name applications in ways that do not force your patrons to fumble around.
- Trial and error is a given. Some software may not meet your library's needs. Be willing to try different software or change settings.
- Try not to upgrade your operating system as soon as new versions become available. Many Linux distributions update frequently. If you are not experiencing problems with your setup, wait to upgrade until you have sufficiently tested the new version.

Good luck with your own experiments in open source! We hope that you will discover tools to help you deliver better, more open public computing for your patrons. And yes, this article was written using open source software: Chromium (Web browser), Fedora Linux (operating system), and OpenOffice Writer (word processor). 🌿

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Coming Soon to a Library Near You:

An Open Source ILS

by Beth Longwell
System Administrator,
Sage Library System

The Sage Library System of Eastern Oregon is taking utilization of open source to a whole new level this year with the migration from our current integrated library system (ILS) to the open source Evergreen ILS (<http://www.open-ils.org>). Following in the footsteps of the Georgia PINES consortium, where Evergreen originated, and other consortia nationwide, Sage is forging new ground in the hopes of improving library service for our member libraries while maximizing budget dollars. The project is in full swing, with an expected “go live” date of December 15, 2010. This time next year, I will have a fuller understanding of the impact of the migration, but for now I can at least share the composition of Sage, the project’s history and status, data migration challenges, and what we hope to gain by this momentous leap.

Since its beginning in 1992 as three libraries joining to form the Pioneer Library System, the consortia has focused on resource sharing and cooperation. Eighteen years and several grant-funded expansions later, the consortium, renamed to Sage, is 64 members strong, spanning twelve counties of Eastern Oregon. Its membership is diverse, encompassing academic, public, school, and special libraries. Sage offers different membership tiers based on level of participation, annual circulation, and number of holdings. Some member libraries maintain holdings in the Sage system for resource sharing, but either have their own circulation system or are not automated. Several from this group have withdrawn from Sage in recent years, mainly in K–12 schools, as budgetary shortfalls force administrators to cut what are perceived as extraneous services. However, Sage continues to grow, working to accomplish greater objectives as a unit than could be done individually.

Sage’s introduction to the Evergreen ILS began in Fall 2007 with a presentation by Doug Hendrichs, Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Advisory Council member, and Jim Scheppke, State Librarian, describing the statewide Georgia PINES system’s implementation of Evergreen. The vision of what the software could mean for Sage, as well as the state, was embraced by the Sage Council. The Council decided to apply for LSTA funding to test the software’s suitability for Sage with the understanding that a migration grant application would be submitted the following year if the test was deemed successful. In March 2010, the Sage Council voted unanimously to migrate to Evergreen as soon as operationally and functionally possible.

Despite tremendous development strides since its introduction in 2006, Evergreen still fell short in the areas of acquisitions and serials, key functions required by Sage member library Eastern Oregon University. Software that was originally designed to meet the needs of public library consortia was only recently being adopted by academic libraries. EOU decided to migrate circulation and cataloging modules along with the rest of Sage, but retain the acquisitions and serials modules on the current ILS until the end of the fiscal year, allowing more time for development of these functions in Evergreen.

EVERGREEN™



Another area of concern with the Evergreen software was the limited functionality of the catalog editor. In the PINES system, cataloging was done outside the system, so there was really no need for a robust editor. Sage, however, utilizes a wide variety of cataloging sources. With a large number of libraries supplying records, there is a continued need for de-duplication of records and record enhancement. To that end, Sage received additional LSTA money to fund cataloging module development work, which should be completed this fall. Because of the nature of open source software, this benefits not only Sage, but the entire Evergreen community. Programming an interface between Evergreen and OCLC Navigator for EOU's participation in the Orbis Cascade consortium is also slated for development. The surging number of libraries and consortia adopting Evergreen is being accompanied by aggressive development in several functional areas and the enrichment of community support resources, many of which are highlighted on the Resource & Sharing Cooperative of Evergreen Libraries (RSCel) Web site, <http://rscel.evergreen-ils.org>.

Currently in the project, servers are being configured for the production environment, to be followed by data migration and customization of the software. Migration of all bibliographic and item data will occur twice, once for data analysis and another in preparation for going live. Simultaneously, consortia efforts are being made to cleanup existing records, prioritizing those areas impacting functionality in the new software. Deletion of non-active patrons and long overdue items will be encouraged, as well as performing inventory before migration.

Customization of new software also affords us the opportunity to look at settings and codes from a new perspective. Added to this mix are three automation projects, and the need to add barcodes to the collection of a couple libraries whose holdings lack them.

Along with configuration and cleanup work, training will be a key factor in the successful transition from one ILS to another. Basic instruction in Evergreen circulation and cataloging will be provided through individual site visits and reinforced by weekly training exercises starting in September. Regional training slated for November will provide an opportunity for review, as well as provide additional training on expected software updates. Since all sites are "going live" at the same time, it is also important for us to identify key people throughout the twelve-county region to serve as the first tier of support in the initial aftermath of the migration.

All in all, this migration will mean a lot of work, and there are days when I wonder what we were thinking. But, in the end, it will be worth it. Moving to open source software allows Sage to take advantage of new features at no additional cost unless we choose to fund development. Features such as bookings, rotating collections, and enhanced OPAC content are just a few examples of added functionality that will exist within Sage after migration.

Another major benefit we will gain by moving to Evergreen is access to and control over our data. Access to the data opens the door to interface possibilities with other software, interoperability which can create greater efficiency for patrons and staff. Ultimately, by using open source software for our ILS, we have the freedom to choose how our money is spent, whether on strengthening in-house support or contracting out for support services. For Sage, the time has come to move in a new direction, that of the open source software Evergreen. 🌿



Tipping the Scales:

How Free Culture Helps Restore Balance in the Age of Copyright Maximalism

by **Rachel Bridgewater**
*Electronic Resources Librarian,
Reed College Library*

In late July, news outlets were abuzz that the Library of Congress had issued important new exemptions to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (Wortham, 2010). United States Copyright Office rule-making historically has been unlikely fodder for breathless mainstream news reporting. That this story was headline news reflects important changes in our relationship to intellectual property and the laws that govern it. To understand how we arrived at a cultural moment where copyright regulations are big news, we can look to the last thirty years of legal and technological change and the activists and organizations that have grown up in response to this change. These activists have come to be called the “free culture” movement.

Berne, Bono, and the DMCA

Copyright law gets complicated fast if you explore it in depth, but at its most basic it is simple. It exists to encourage the production of new creative work by balancing the public’s interest and the interest of copyright holders. Copyright holders get monopolies on their works, enabling them to profit and control how those works enter the marketplace. The public’s interest is protected because that monopoly is temporary and limited. Copyrighted works eventually enter the public domain and become available to future artists, writers, and other creators as inspiration and raw material.



“The Congress shall have the Power ... To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.”

(U.S. Constitution, Art. I, § 8, Cl. 8)

United States copyright law recognizes that culture is built on what has come before (Letham’s “The ecstasy of influence” (2007) is an elegant discussion of the importance of such borrowing). The public’s interest is also protected by exemptions. For instance, the first sale doctrine allows libraries to loan books, while fair use allows us to criticize, satirize, and teach with copyrighted materials. This balance among competing interests is tricky and, many would argue, imbalanced.

Three 20th century changes to copyright law, which had remained relatively unchanged since 1790, are responsible for this imbalance. In 1976, copyright law was overhauled dramatically after a decades-long effort to harmonize US laws with the Berne Convention, an international copyright agreement (Patry, 2000). The 1976 law, among other things, removed “formalities”: copyright owners were no longer required to register their copyrights nor print notice of copyright on their works. In the post-Berne world, every napkin doodle had the full protection of copyright at the moment of doodling. The duration of copyright was also extended from 28 years plus one optional renewal to the life of the author plus 50 years.

Not satisfied with this dramatic lengthening of copyright, in 1997 Sonny Bono introduced the Copyright Term Extension Act, which extended duration to life of the author



plus 70 years. The Act passed in 1998 and was named in honor of Bono, who died shortly after its introduction.

Not a great year for aficionados of reasonable copyright, 1998 also saw the passage of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). The DMCA criminalized circumventing technological measures that limit access to copyrighted materials. Where digital rights management (DRM) was in place to prevent copying, trying to get around those measures was now a crime, even if the copying you intended was legal.

These three changes to the copyright law have gutted the public interest protection that has always been part of the copyright bargain. The flow of works into the public domain has slowed to a trickle due to the greatly lengthened copyright term. The massive number of works receiving automatic copyright are not required to be registered anywhere, which makes asking for permission confusing and difficult. And digital works protected by DRM exist outside of the normal exemptions in the law that normally protect free speech.

The rise of the permissions culture

These late 20th century changes to the copyright law threaten to give way to a “permissions culture” (Boynton, 2004). Instead of a limited and brief copyright term enjoyed only by those who opt in, we now have automatic and lengthy copyright. With the DMCA, the public loses the right to exercise those basic exemptions such as first sale and fair use if the digital work they purchase is protected by DRM. In this environment, nearly all uses of creative works must be done with (and only with) permission of the copyright holder. Leaving aside for a moment philosophical questions about how such policies could stifle creativity and criticism, this copyright regime is problematic from a purely practical perspective; it is this combination of long and automatic copyright that has given rise to what we in the library world know as the “orphan works” problem.

From “publish and purchase” to “post and download”

As this legal shift began to change our relationship to cultural products, the environment in which information was being produced, disseminated, and used was being radically transformed by the Web, widespread adoption of broadband, and plummeting cost of storage space. In 1976, we operated in a world where copyrighted materials became available from a publisher: a book publisher, record label, or movie studio. In this environment, the average citizen going about their daily work rarely engaged in activities where copyright came into play.

As the Web has evolved and tools for easy distribution of content have made us all potential publishers, the public faces copyright policy out of sync with their practices. Automatic “all rights reserved” stands in the way of a creator’s ability to collaborate, remix, mash up, share, adapt, and otherwise play with the products of culture. In this environment, a woman sharing a video of her child dancing to some music in the background finds herself afoul of the law (Anderson, 2007).

Creative Commons: A partial solution

By 2001, a release valve was needed for the combined pressure of aggressive changes to copyright law, the explosion of copyrighted material facilitated by the Internet, and increasing interest from scholars, artists, and laypeople alike to collaborate and share. Creative



Commons (<http://www.creativecommons.org>), a nonprofit organization founded by intellectual property scholar Lawrence Lessig, computer science professor Hal Abelson, and public domain advocate Eric Eldred, provided just such a valve. Within a year, Creative Commons released their first set of licenses, allowing creators of content to indicate that they wanted to retain something less than all of the rights to their works.



- 2001 - Creative Commons founded.
- 2002 - Version 1.0 licenses released.
- 2003 - Approximately 1 million licenses in use.
- 2006 - Estimated 50 million licensed works.
- 2008 - Estimated 130 million CC-licensed works.

(Creative Commons, 2010)

Inspired by the work of the Free Software Foundation (which developed the GNU General Public License in the mid-1980s, giving rise to what we now know as open source software) (Bretthauer, 2002), these licenses essentially allow content creators to grant permission in advance for certain categories of use. As Boyle (2008) explains:

“Creative Commons was conceived as a private ‘hack’ to produce a more fine-tuned copyright structure, to replace ‘all rights reserved’ with ‘some rights reserved’ for those who wished to do so. It tried to do for culture what the General Public License had done for software. It made use of the same technologies that had created the issue: the technologies that made fixation of expressive content and its distribution to the world something that people, as well as large concentrations of capital, could do.” (182–183)

CC licenses have, in less than a decade, resulted in a proliferation of shareable materials. Though Creative Commons initially was founded and supported by the relatively small group of people actively concerned about free culture, the licenses have rapidly become mainstream. CC licenses are used on everything from blog posts and podcasts to magazine and journal articles to music albums and feature films. Google and Yahoo now allow users to limit searches based on usage rights, returning only CC-licensed works. Similarly, the photo sharing site Flickr allows users to license their images with CC licenses and limit searches to CC-licensed photos. This steady creep of CC licenses into the mainstream speaks to a real need for a more flexible and utilitarian approach to intellectual property.

Useful but complex

Unfortunately, CC licenses do come with some complexity. Gordon-Murnane (2010) identifies three potential problems with CC licenses. First, Creative Commons licenses are non-revocable, which means that if you change your mind about sharing your work you cannot do anything about the copies of your work that already CC-licensed. Second, there



is not a high degree of consensus regarding how people understand “noncommercial,” one of the license attributes (Creative Commons, 2009). Finally, downstream derivative works of a user’s content could present problems. We cannot anticipate all future uses of a work—to some extent, that is a point of sharing in the first place—and we may object to some uses.

Not just copyright

Whether or not we regard Creative Commons and the myriad other organizations involved with this kind of information policy work as a “movement,” it is safe to say that “free culture” does not begin and end with copyright reform. A glance at the Web sites of such organizations as the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Public Knowledge—or even the American Library Association—gives a sense of the range of issues embraced by proponents of “free culture.” Privacy, network neutrality, patent and trademark reform, broadband access, open design, and e-voting transparency are among the many issues that tend to fall under the broad “free culture” umbrella. In many ways, this range of issues reflects the diversity of constituents that come together under this moniker. Librarians, musicians, scholars, small publishers, huge companies like Google, lawyers, programmers, engineers, sculptors, filmmakers, and teachers are just some of the groups that participate in the free culture movement.

What’s a librarian to do?

Libraries are, of course, at the center of many “free culture” issues. Our professional organizations work for information policies that protect the public’s access to information—pushing for orphan works legislation, getting the NIH open access mandate passed, participating in the Google Books settlement debate, working to preserve network neutrality, and many other activities. But at a local, personal level what can we as individual librarians do?

- **Learn copyright basics**
Individual librarians and library workers should learn the basics of copyright, including the exemptions and how to confidently conduct a fair use analysis. Librarians can inadvertently be enemies of free culture when they are unnecessarily conservative about copyright either out of fear or simply not feeling like they understand the law.
- **Offer alternatives**
Learn about Creative Commons and how to find CC-licensed materials. Instead of being “copyright cops,” affirmatively direct users to licensed materials as alternatives to “all rights reserved” ones. In addition to being great service, these conversations are excellent opportunities to educate patrons about copyright.
- **Socialize**
Connect with others in your community who share a passion for free culture issues. Open source programmers often have user group meetings and social events where non-techies are welcome. Talk to that professor on campus who makes it a point to publish in an open access journal.
- **Tell stories**
One of the biggest challenges in advocating for the public’s interest in copyright and information policy issues is humanizing fairly esoteric issues when we talk to legislators.



Elected officials hear regularly from the big owners of content—publishers, movie studios, the recording industry—about the challenges posed by the Internet to their businesses. If we do not give legislators a clear picture of how aggressive copyright affects the average person's ability to learn, create, share, and speak her mind, we can hardly blame them for agreeing to copyright policies that do not suit our needs.

- **Be fearless**

Finally, do not be afraid to be a free culture booster! The rhetoric around free culture issues gets heated. At times, it seems asserting fair use is tantamount to endorsing piracy. It is not! Remember that copyright is designed at its heart to balance the interests of content owners and the public. Using the copyright exemptions like fair use is not radical or liberal; it is a fundamental right. Librarians are fearless in defending such liberties as the freedom to read. We should be as confident in our defense of and advocacy for reasonable copyright. 🌿

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Collective Voice for Collective Good:

Library Consortia, Open Access, and the Future of Scholarly Communication

by **Kim Marsh Read**
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For more than 120 years, library consortia have facilitated the processes by which individual libraries meet their patrons' needs. Library consortia can be traced to conferences starting in 1853, which called for the formation of a professional library organization. Motivated by the desire to collaborate and save money, a formal organization materialized in 1876 when a group of librarians formed the American Library Association (ALA). In relaying the events of that 1876 conference in Philadelphia and its accompanying resolution, the ALA's Web site states, "The aim of the Association, in that resolution, was 'to enable librarians to do their present work more easily and at less expense'" (American Library Association, 2010).

Those founding principles hold true for library consortia today. Consortia have allowed librarians to stretch their dollars at a time when costs are increasing and library budgets are stagnant or even decreasing (Maskell, 2008). Consortia have become particularly indispensable for their collective voice in negotiating pricing and licensing agreements with publishers. The oft-mentioned "crisis in scholarly communication," due to steadily increasing journal costs and the onset of e-publishing, has cemented a modern dependence upon consortia.

Rising journal costs, especially in scientific, technical, and medical fields, have been staggering. According to English and Raphael (2006), the 1980s and 1990s saw subscriptions of scientific journals rising at double-digit rates. In the new millennium, prices continue to rise at a rate at least double that of inflation. Journal pricing structures and large mergers in the publishing industry are two factors affecting costs (Bergman, 2006). Even with the successful efforts of consortia to make somewhat reasonable deals with publishers, libraries are regularly forced to cancel journal subscriptions and reduce monograph budgets. Further, the "Big Deals" they make with large conglomerate publishers are often so pricey as to restrict purchasing of journals and resources produced by smaller publishers (Rolnik, 2009).

In addition to limiting library budgets, the crisis in scholarly communication has also contributed to widening disparity in access to information. This inequality can be found among individual colleges and universities as well as among scholars of different nations. Many prestigious research universities can continue to pay increasing journal costs while smaller institutions cannot (Belle, 2002). The disparity is even greater when the developing world is considered, where purchasing access to scholarly journals is often "next to impossible" (Walker, 2009).

Open Access Models

In an age when technology should be increasing access to scholarly information, it now has the opposite effect. Patrons, scholars, educators, students, and the community suffer when libraries are unable to provide access to scholarly information. This starkly contrasts with the ubiquitous feel of available information on the Internet. Open access (OA) models hold great potential for reducing disparity in access to information and easing strain on library budgets. Some additional benefits of OA include authors' ability to disseminate research more autonomously with personal Web sites and blogs and student access to scholarly communication post-graduation. By providing free and unrestricted access, OA models, in the form of journals, institutional repositories, and author-produced Web sites and blogs, let loose the potential for broader and more equitable access to information.

Most librarians would contest the idea that access to information should be determined by ability to pay. Maskell has called providing equitable access to information regardless of a patron's ability to pay "a cornerstone of library service since its inception" (2008). This



concept, and the accompanying ability of the Internet to facilitate equitable access, are articulated in the Budapest Open Access Initiative, which states:

An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists and scholars to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the Internet. The public good they make possible is the worldwide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds. Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge. (Chan et al., 2002)

Scientific information, which potentially benefits all of us, provides a strong case for OA. Citizens pay for research funded by the government and have to pay again for access to that information when authors sign all rights to commercial publishers. OA models redress inequities existing in access to results of government-funded research. The National Institutes of Health, which account for about a third of all government-funded research, now requires all researchers to deposit results in PubMed Central, the OA repository for the National Library of Medicine.

The Role of Librarians

OA is not without challenges. For starters, publishing in OA journals and institutional repositories carries its own, although significantly lower, costs. More prohibitive is the resistance to OA by faculty, whose livelihoods currently depend on being published in commercial journals. Additionally, many faculty are simply unaware of the skyrocketing costs of journals and their libraries' inability to afford them. But even with that knowledge, faculty are faced with the need to publish in the most prestigious journals they can. They do not get paid to publish in prestigious journals, but rewards come in the form of promotion, tenure, and career advancement.

The question then becomes, what can librarians do to encourage faculty to take part in OA models? The most basic action a librarian can take is education:

- Discussing with faculty the pricing structure and increased cost of journals as well as the stagnation of library budgets;
- Educating faculty about copyright law and to what they are agreeing when they sign copyright over to publishers;
- Urging faculty to negotiate with publishers for the right to deposit their works in an institutional repository;
- Encouraging faculty to serve on peer review boards of OA journals; and
- Discussing peer review as it pertains to OA models.



Some critics of OA claim peer review will suffer in an open access journal. OA journals differ from traditional journals primarily in access, delivery, and cost. The way peer review is conducted in traditional journals can be duplicated in OA journals; neither the price of the journal nor its form of publication needs to determine the efficacy of peer review (Suber, 2007). The Public Library of Science (PLOS) is one prominent example. With a prestigious editorial board composed of top editors recruited from traditional scientific and medical journals, the PLOS created selective OA journals that accept fewer than ten percent of submissions (Public Library of Science, 2009). Reclaiming peer review from the realm of commercial publishers and reasserting it within academic societies and OA initiatives is an idea that could not only bolster OA models, but academia's independence and prestige as well.

Considering faculty's needs in relation to publishing, promotion, and tenure is crucial. Librarians need to play a part in the transition to a new system for acknowledging and rewarding faculty who publish. OA models need to be recognized as scholarly communication worthy of promotion and tenure. Advocacy in the form of discussion and collaboration with faculty and administrators is necessary to effect this change.

The Evolving Role of Consortia

What role can consortia play in the OA movement? Library consortia have proven that a collective voice succeeds where a solitary one fails. Through advocacy, education, and institutional repositories, consortia are utilizing collaborative relationships to effect change.

Talking with faculty about OA requires knowledge of its principles and technology, as well as preparation and strategy (Malenfant, 2010). Many librarians agree with an advocacy role, but carrying the torch alone or even as a team can seem as daunting as confronting the steep increases in journal costs. Some consortia have created informational packets, policy statements, written negotiation tools, and brochures for both librarians and faculty. The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), a division of the Association of Research Libraries, is a pioneering effort in this direction. In existence since 1997 and now supported by over 800 alliance members, SPARC furthers the OA movement by educating, advocating, and assisting with the creation and proliferation of OA publishing.

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL), a 29-member consortium, is another vocal advocate for OA. With its "Transform Scholarly Communication" project, CARL advocates for both institutional repositories and authors' rights. CARL has worked with SPARC to create a Canadian Author Addendum to aid faculty and researchers in retaining the rights to their writings. Most recently, CARL has initiated an Institutional Repository Pilot Project Harvester. The harvester makes searchable the contents of CARL member libraries' repositories to increase accessibility of OA content.

The Boston Library Consortium, with 17 members, supports the OA movement via advocacy and education. Following the lead of its member library, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the consortium adopted an "Agreement to Extend Author's Rights." By advocating for authors' rights and institutional repositories, the Boston Library Consortium hopes to inspire its members to prioritize OA efforts (Corbett, 2009).

Some library consortia have taken a role in creating and maintaining institutional repositories in addition to advocacy and education efforts. By sharing the cost of infrastructure, such as staffing, hardware, and networked storage space, consortia can put institutional repositories within reach of even very small institutions. OhioLINK, consortium



for 89 member libraries, has done just this. Though its larger member libraries could build institutional repositories on their own, OhioLINK saw the need to aid its smaller members, for whom creating an institutional repository would be cost-prohibitive (Smith, 2009). Through its Digital Resource Commons, seventeen OhioLINK libraries have their own institutional repository.

The Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries has an institutional repository system similar to that of OhioLINK. Their Alliance Digital Repository Service (ADR) uses open source software, centralized hardware, and shared staff to power individualized repositories for its member libraries. Seven of the ten Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries institutions have repositories through ADR.

Contributing financially to broader OA efforts is another way for consortia to participate in the OA movement. OhioLINK and the Pacific Northwest's Orbis Cascade Alliance are among fifteen library consortia that purchase a membership with the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The DOAJ facilitates identifying and using peer-reviewed scholarly and scientific OA journals.

By sharing resources, ideas, expertise, and funding, consortia with OA initiatives can lead the transition to more sustainable and equitable forms of scholarly communication. Library consortia are uniquely poised to further the ideal of equitable access to information. Maskell (2008) states that this view of library consortia "supports the belief that consortia have a responsibility to address social issues such as the widening gap between the information rich and the information poor."


OA initiatives sponsored by consortia can also mitigate the strain on library budgets. Consortia have successfully procured savings for libraries by negotiating with publishers. Those that actively support OA models have the potential to greatly reduce libraries' costs because OA models are much cheaper for libraries than traditional journals. Suber (2007) states, "We can be confident that OA journals are economically sustainable because the true costs of peer review, manuscript preparation, and OA dissemination are considerably lower than the prices we currently pay for subscription-based journals. ... Moreover, as OA spreads, libraries will realize large savings from the conversion, cancellation, or demise of subscription-based journals."

Conclusion

Library consortia that support OA models serve library budgets, researchers, faculty, students, and the public good. The future of scholarly communication has limited room for the continued dominance of traditional journals, a dominance fueled by profits. Publishers want to make money, thus meeting the needs of shareholders. Researchers and faculty want to communicate their findings and writings in a way that is acknowledged by their colleagues. Librarians want to ensure access to this communication. Making a profit is not in the direct interest of either researchers or librarians.

That librarian/researcher/scholars' interests are at odds with publishers' is not new. As Melvil Dewey encouraged over 120 years ago in his 1889 address at the Second International Library Conference, "The librarian must be the librarian militant before he can be the librarian triumphant. At the end of another century ... our descendants will look back with wonder to find that we have so long been satisfied to leave the control of the all-pervading, all-influencing newspaper in the hands of people who have behind them no motive better than 'the almighty



dollar” (qtd. in Belle, 2002). Equitable access to information remains a core principle of social justice that cannot be ignored by librarians. Just as library consortia have united in a collective voice to negotiate pricing and licensing agreements with publishers, they similarly hold the potential to successfully advocate on behalf of open access models. 

Where to look for more information:

- Boston Library Consortium-Scholarly Communication:
<http://www.blc.org/userservices/scholarlycommunication/>
- Canadian Association of Research Libraries-Transform Scholarly Communication:
<http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/projects-e.html>
- Colorado Association of Research Libraries-Alliance Digital Repository:
<http://adresources.coalliance.org/>
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<http://www.doaj.org/>
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Open Sesame:

The Open Science and Open Data Movements and Their Implications for Librarians

by **Hope Leman**
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As I write this article, my suitcase sits beside me still not properly emptied after having accompanied me to the Genetic Alliance Annual Conference in Bethesda, Maryland. I spoke there on July 17, 2010, on “Science 2.0, Medicine 2.0, Health 2.0, and Open Science: The Revolution is Now.”

And at the bottom of my computer screen, I see the Web site of the Open Science Summit, which will be held in Berkeley, California, July 29–31, 2010, long before you will read this article.

So what does all this have to do with libraries and librarians? More than you might think.

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of Open Science and Open Data, let’s talk a little about librarians and where many of us work these days. Sometimes, it is outside the traditional library setting.

Take me (my favorite subject!), for example. I started off in the library profession in a small community hospital library. I now work in the Center for Health Research and Quality, managing two free online databases, ResearchRaven and ScanGrants. Thus, between 2004 and now, I have gone from working in a library setting—shelving books, recording arrival of hard copy journals, and dealing with people face to face—to working almost exclusively online creating Web-based resources for librarians and end-users who I will, for the most part, never meet.

Now, this not to say that I do not value library as place, and I do miss the interactions with my old boss and patrons. But my situation is not unlike what has happened to many of us in the library profession. We have discovered opportunities to develop new services and expand the range of our relationships by noting what is happening in other realms, such as science and medicine, vis-à-vis the explosion of online activity. And much of what is happening in online science and Open Science parallels what is happening in libraries.

How so? Well, just as patrons now use libraries remotely and electronically, increasingly science is done online. This could be single projects in chemistry done in the Open Notebook mode, an electronic laboratory notebook freely available and indexed on common search engines, with the processes and results open to all. It could also be huge e-science projects involving labs throughout the world, employing massive amounts of computing power and crunching what is only semi-jocularly referred to as “big data.”

Whew, Open Science seems complicated! Why do I need to say so much to describe the concept of Open Science? Perhaps it is because Open Science touches on so many issues: how science is conducted, research results are disseminated and evaluated, results are translated, and ultimately clinical use, so that patients and their supporters will benefit from this faster, more powerful way of doing science.

Librarians and libraries stand to gain if we grasp opportunities to develop services that aggregate and otherwise render useful the huge amount of data that is going to be produced. Open Science is becoming the new normal, and data is becoming more open (Stuart, 2010). Science and data are becoming more open for all to utilize as each user and institution sees fit. The Obama Administration is preparing to release vast amounts of government-held raw data that everyone from start-ups to corporate behemoths is going to try to repurpose and monetize. We librarians need to get into the fray and create our own non-commercial tools and services in like but selfless public service fashion.



We could also lose out if we fail to note the development of Open Science and do not develop services that the scientific community values. Similarly, we lose if we fail to note that the scholarly article and the idea of the journal itself are not destined to forever remain the mainstays of scientific communication.

Cataloging, for instance, will become, paradoxically, more important as increasing amounts of information are produced and less important as mainstream publishing, and thus journals, decrease in power; much of the discussion in science will take place outside the realm of our comfort zone in libraries. Publication will become almost an afterthought or a matter of choice for scientists as the “publish or perish” model gives way to a model based more on open peer review and online discussion of preliminary results and less on the current, achingly-slow process of publishing in expensive journals that many libraries can no longer afford anyway.

Catalogers will have to become detectives and intelligence agents to determine where discussion is taking place, what needs to be recorded, and what the final version is to be. The article is becoming less a finished, static object and more something that is forever in flux, and microcontent such as a single graph or table are becoming the key item of interest rather than an article proper.

Librarians are already very good at finding information and packaging it for our patrons. There are going to be more places where that information lies on the Web, from Open Notebooks to wikis to slideshows to conversations in scientific social networking communities to online videos. We will have to become experts in searching for such content and developing standards to preserve it. And it is not going to be easy to insert ourselves into the conversation, given that much of what librarians will want to bring up are arcane and, well, boring to scientists, whose eyes glaze over when we drone on about metadata and ontologies.

This brings me back to the conference I noted at the beginning of my article. Why else does Open Science matter to librarians, and what was I doing at talking about it to a roomful of disease advocates, health policy makers, academics in health services research and public health at the Genetic Alliance Annual Conference? What do all of those people have to do with Open Science?

Well, disease advocates tend to be passionately committed to curing diseases, or at least lessening the suffering of the afflicted. Thus, they tend to raise money for medical research. And one fascinating trend among funders, even increasingly the federal government, is to ask grant applicants not only about the aim and scope of the research but also about how they will disseminate results.

For example, starting in 2008, Autism Speaks, an autism science and advocacy organization, began requiring grantees to deposit any resulting peer-reviewed research papers in PubMed Central. This was a milestone and, one hopes, a precedent that will be adopted by other organizations. It is more bang for the funder’s research dollar: the greater the number of researchers that can access results, the higher the likelihood that the results can be capitalized on and so further the aims of the original funder. And this does not even consider the PR value of having the name of one’s organization spread throughout the world via downloads from open access sites such as PubMed Central.

Again, why does all of this open access (and more broadly Open Science) activity matter to libraries? Well, for one, most librarians are under pressure to cut back on journal subscrip-



tions. The more content we can acquire via open access, the better. Most of us do not have the riches of ScienceDirect at our fingertips. But we do have patrons who need solid medical information, and sometimes our only option is open access articles. As awareness of Open Science grows among funders, research results will filter down to the librarian and patron level in just a few years as opposed to many years—or never—under the current model.

And there is only going to be more pressure on funders from their own constituents (that is, the ill and their families, who want the latest and best information about their diseases) for greater openness by researchers. The open access movement for government-funded research is no longer just a matter for librarians. A tipping point seems to have been reached in the public opinion and understanding of the stakes; it is not just library journal budgets, but human lives.

What else do librarians need to know about the Open Science movement? Well, one thing we need to be able to do is develop a high tolerance for fancy sounding phrases and realize that what sounds like hype actually does force us to think about the coming revolution in scientific communication. For example, as I mentioned, I looked over the Web site of the Open Science Summit (<http://opensciencesummit.com>) while writing this article. Specifically, I looked at the list of presenters and came across some phrases that will assist me in explicating matters here.

Let's start with this: "conceptual and experimental toolkit and construct the foundational technologies needed to complete them." We will begin with the conceptual part of that. As librarians, we have to think of ourselves in two places at once: our physical spaces and our place in cyberspace. We have been able to make that conceptual shift even if some of us are more tethered emotionally to the reference desk than the instant messaging widget.

Indeed, in some ways, librarians have transitioned to Library 2.0 better than some scientists have to Open Science. Many scientists balk even at admitting that there is such a thing as Open Science or that peer review and tenure processes may change radically in coming years. These changes are particularly heralded by young researchers, who will ask that their writings on personal blogs and activities in virtual research environments be factored into tenure reviews.

So much for the conceptual part. What about the experimental part of the toolkit? Interestingly, as one of the leaders of the Open Science movement (particularly of the subset Open Notebook Science), Jean-Claude Bradley, points out, much of the beauty and appeal of Open Science is that it can be done with existing, free or inexpensive online tools such as Google Docs, wikis, slideshows, or open access journal software. (See Bradley's blog "Useful Chemistry," <http://usefulchem.blogspot.com/>, for real-world examples of Open Science in action.) Open Science then—unlike e-science, which tends to require supercomputing power or at least large teams at many major institutions—is surprisingly cost effective. Thus, the last part of that phrase, the part about foundational technologies being needed, is already in place.

Now, as library professionals, who spend a great deal of time determining the value of search results, you may be asking, "Okay, so Open Science is new. It is faster than older methods. It does not cost a lot. But is it good science? What about peer review?"

In the old days, a toll access journal ran an article through a peer review process in which reviewers' identities were unknown to authors and authors' identities were sometimes,



but not always, unknown to reviewers. Thus, the system was open to accusations of good old boyism and not infrequently led to disillusionment or distrust among new entrants onto the scene (e.g., women and minorities). This system also took an inordinately long time and did not prevent fraud adequately.

By contrast, in open peer review, the identities of both authors and reviewers are revealed and, ideally, both the paper and the comments are open to all. This transparency is unprecedented and makes even some in the Open Science community a little nervous. But it certainly brings science into the sunlight and makes it far more likely that the general public, and young people in particular, will take interest. And such interest in science can help people think analytically, recognize fallacious arguments, and improve their own observational skills. Librarians should seize opportunities to engage young people in the growing drive for undergraduate research that is project-based and not coursework-based. Some of the leaders of Open Science (such as Bradley) are also caring, innovative teachers, and those are just the kind of faculty partners academic librarians seek.

And speaking of partnerships, here is another bit of wording from the Open Science Summit Web site for us to ponder: "... Emerging biotechnologies and the Web are redefining the relationships between scientific research communities, communities from the general public, and the network of actors in-between." Librarians are the actors in-between. We are perfectly positioned to help people who are puzzled by what Open Science is, from research administrators to science educators in our local high schools. Librarianship and Open Science are both about discovery and collaboration. We know better than anyone that our current publishing models are too rigid and tend to favor the already information-rich at the expense of patients, struggling scholars, and poorer institutions. Open Science is an equalizer as well as efficiency engine.

It is also an opportunity for those librarians with the technical and trend-spotting skills to develop tools and services for its practitioners and patrons further down the pipeline whom we can serve by opening up the door to Open Science. Open Science: open sesame to knowledge and scientific advancement. 🌿

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The Promise of Open Government, for the Nation and for Oregon

National Overview
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Oregon Overview
by Roberta Richards
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The library community has long been a leader, through the depository library system and such initiatives as CyberCemetery (<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/>), in ensuring ongoing public access to government publications. Moreover, in a 2009–2010 assessment (American Library Association, 2010) of public access to computers and the Internet in U.S. public libraries, 88 percent of libraries reported that ensuring access to government information and services is either important or the most important Internet service they offer to the library community. And 89 percent of reporting libraries offer as-needed assistance to patrons for accessing and using e-government Web sites. Of course, libraries cannot provide access to government information unless the government makes it open, accessible, and usable.

Open Government, in the Nation

Efforts are being made to increase this openness. On his first full day in office, President Obama issued a Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government (White House, 2009, January 19a), committing his Administration to:

Creat[e] an unprecedented level of openness in Government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government.

The three key principles he laid out are transparency, participation, and collaboration. The Memorandum further states that:

Government should be transparent. Transparency promotes accountability and provides information for citizens about what their Government is doing. Information maintained by the Federal Government is a national asset.

Government should be participatory. Public engagement enhances the Government's effectiveness and improves the quality of its decisions. Knowledge is widely dispersed in society, and public officials benefit from having access to that dispersed knowledge.

Government should be collaborative. Collaboration actively engages Americans in the work of their Government. (White House, 2009, January 19a)

This article focuses on transparency as the fundamental underpinning for open government.

On January 21, 2009, the President also issued a Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act (White House, 2009, January 19b), which opens by noting:

A democracy requires accountability, and accountability requires transparency. As Justice Louis Brandeis wrote, 'sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.' In our democracy, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which encourages accountability through transparency, is the most prominent expression of a profound national commitment to ensuring an open government. At the heart of that commitment is the idea that accountability is in the interest of the Government and the citizenry alike. (White House, 2009, January 19b)



The Memorandum directs that the Freedom of Information Act should be administered with a clear presumption: if in doubt, openness prevails. Agencies are directed to presume in favor of disclosure with all decisions involving FOIA, and to take affirmative steps to make information public, without waiting for specific requests from the public.

On March 19, 2009, Attorney General Eric Holder issued much-anticipated comprehensive new guidelines to the heads of executive departments and agencies governing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), directing them to presume openness when administering the FOIA. It expressly rescinded guidelines issued on Oct. 12, 2001, by former Attorney General John Ashcroft.

To begin making these commitments actual, on December 8, 2009, the Administration issued a Directive to agencies to develop and publish open government plans by April 7, 2010 (Office of Management and Budget, 2009, December 8). In April, a consortium of volunteers coordinated by OpenTheGovernment.org evaluated the plans submitted by a number of agencies on how they met the requirements of the Directive. The evaluations revealed wide variation in the quality of the plans, especially in terms of specificity. Some were exceptional; others were quite weak.

Many of the agencies have revised and improved their plans since initial publication in April (OpenTheGovernment.org, 2010). The government is now beginning to implement these plans and change the default setting, the “normal” mode to openness. If properly implemented, the plans could serve as vehicles for fundamentally changing the way the federal government interacts with the public. This, in turn, may prove to be a catalyst for shifting public trust in government.

Even when all agencies meet the minimal requirements identified in the Directive, though, more needs to be done to improve openness in government. First and foremost, the public must be assured that they can obtain certain information—such as visitor logs for key agency personnel and specific contract information—consistently across government, regardless of agency. This core information, designed to ensure accountability and promote informed participation, should become a “floor” for all agencies.

Many agencies have put large amounts of data on Data.gov and have held online forums, but the harder work will be getting them to disclose records and other kinds of information proactively, to make the Freedom of Information Act work more effectively, and to create greater public engagement in governance.

Moreover, too little thought has been directed at permanent preservation and public access to government information in all forms, including records, data, publications, video, etc. Agencies were required in their Open Government Plans to provide a link to “a publicly available Web site that shows how the agency is meeting its existing records management requirements, ... which includes such activities as identifying and scheduling all electronic records and ensuring the timely transfer of all permanently valuable records to the National Archives” (Office of Management and Budget, 2009). Most agencies’ sites are anemic, at best. Their electronic records management is worse yet.

According to a recently-released report by the National Archives and Records Administration (2010), 79% of agencies are at moderate (43%) to high (36%) risk of improper disposition of Federal records.

On the Freedom of Information Act front, audits by the National Security Archive (2010) and the Associated Press (Theimer, 2010) have revealed that the effect of the President’s Memorandum and the Attorney General’s guidelines has varied widely—and less than



spectacularly—government-wide. On March 16, 2010, during Sunshine Week, Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and Counsel to the President Bob Bauer issued a Memorandum for Agency and Department Heads to request better implementation of the President’s memorandum, asking agencies to:

Take action as follows to ensure full implementation of the President’s Memorandum on FOIA. First, you should update all FOIA guidance and training materials to include the principles articulated in the President’s Memorandum. Second, you should assess whether you are devoting adequate resources to responding to FOIA requests promptly and cooperatively, consistent with the requirements for addressing this Presidential priority. (Emanuel and Bauer, 2010)

Will the Administration’s promises be ones on which the public can collect? All of these initiatives are in the early stages, but, at least in some top layers, there also appears to be commitment and enthusiasm.

With these initiatives, the opportunities exist for real change in how the federal executive branch works with the public. The Obama Administration is taking the building blocks of statute and regulation to begin to construct a culture of openness in the federal executive branch. This deployment of these existing tools is, in itself, a major step forward. As the Administration is fond of noting, though, it is going to take a lot of effort and time to turn the government (an aircraft carrier in their metaphor) around. The process has begun; many of the agencies have embraced openness and are working to figure out how to “bake it in” and sustain it as part of their missions and strategies.

It is going to take the involvement of all members of the public who care about ensured access to government information to work with and on the agencies and the White House to keep this process on track and in the direction we want it to go.

Open Government, in Oregon

The commitment to open government at the federal level is being echoed here in Oregon. A new transparency page on Oregon.gov makes Oregon public expenditures easier to track, as required by the 2009 Legislature. Attorney General John Kroger has launched a Government Transparency Initiative and declared enforcement of transparency laws a “major priority” for the Department of Justice (Oregon Department of Justice, 2010). A new position has been created, the Government Transparency Counsel, to improve enforcement of Oregon’s open government laws. In coordination with the Oregon Newspaper Publisher’s Association, the Attorney General’s office sponsored a series of public meetings as part of a systematic review of Oregon’s transparency laws, with the goal to identify areas for improvement to address in the 2011 legislative session.

In Oregon, the right of public access to government information was codified by the 1973 Legislature in a set of comprehensive public records laws, which serve some of the same functions as the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) on the federal level (Open Oregon, 2007). Oregon public records that should be open for inspection include those of any “public body,” defined in the statutes as “every state officer, agency, department, division, bureau, board and commission; every county and city governing body, school district, special district, municipal corporation, and any board, department, commission, council, or agency thereof; and any other public agency of this state” (ORS 192.410(3)). Exemptions to



these disclosure requirements are also part of the statutes, including one close to the hearts of library staff: ORS 192.502(23), which exempts library records from public disclosure laws, allowing libraries to keep patron records confidential.

While some exemptions to disclosure laws are essential to protect privacy or safety, open government watchdogs groups are concerned that the growing number of exemptions in Oregon (450 by the Transparency Counsel's count with more passed each biennium) may be creating pockets of government secrecy. Advocates of open government in Oregon are also concerned about the mishmash of fee structures and timelines for compliance, as agencies determine individually what is fair and appropriate.

Another potential barrier to access for those uninitiated in the structure of government information is simply knowing where to start, as record requests need to go to the specific city, county, or state agency (or bureau, commission, division, etc.) that keeps those files. All of these issues are under review as part of the Government Transparency Initiative.

What does this transparency initiative mean for libraries? Potentially, this effort could make it easier for library staff assisting patrons seeking public records by making more records available and making those records easier to access. This would be a terrific gain, as libraries are on the frontline of making the promise of open government a reality. Libraries provide the computers and assistance that give everyone access to e-government on different levels.

Library staff can help promote open government in Oregon by helping our patrons navigate the process of requesting a public record, which involves determining which agency is likely to have the needed records, and locating information (often deep in the agency's Web site) about the process and fee structure for requesting records. We can also support open government by participating in the process currently underway to overhaul the rules on public records and public meetings, with the goals to make more records available and reduce barriers to accessing those records.

A detailed primer on the process of requesting an Oregon public record, including an automated form for creating a records request letter, is available at the Web site for Open Oregon, A Freedom of Information Coalition: <http://www.open-oregon.com>. Another great resource is the Department of Justice's public records Web site, which includes an online copy of the Attorney General's Public Records and Meetings Manual, a form for appealing a denial of a public records request, and a quite fascinating list of Public Records of High Profile Investigations: http://www.doj.state.or.us/public_records.

For examples of how to request specific records, visit the Web sites for DEQ (<http://www.deq.state.or.us/records/requestingPublicRecords.htm>) or the City of Salem (<http://www.cityofsalem.net/Departments/Legal/Pages/PublicRecordsPolicy.aspx>). The Oregon government transparency Web site, which is designed to show "how government works, what your taxes buy, and how purchasing decisions occur," is available at <http://oregon.gov/sites/transparency>.

The Department of Justice Web site is currently accepting comments about the transparency initiative, and the library community is encouraged to voice our support for open government to the DOJ and our state representatives as this initiative in support of openness progresses. The forecast of more sunshine on both the state and federal level is very welcome, but the devil is always in the details, so the library community's continued vigilance is needed to ensure that this promise of open government is fulfilled. 🌿



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Oregon's LSTA State Grant Program:

Excavating Best Practice, Reaching Towards Transparency

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and

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As one compares the library service landscape today versus a decade ago, much of what were then wishes are now realities. For example, Plinkit Web sites for small libraries, subsidies for statewide database licensing, and OSLIS, a thriving Web portal for the K–12 community. How did these come to pass? A dig through the records shows the critical involvement of Oregon's library community, made possible by increasing transparency in allocating LSTA funding.

When Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) became the major federal grant program for libraries in 1996, it broke new ground. LSTA was designed as a block grant program, with many kinds of libraries and projects emphasizing innovation and partnerships now being eligible for funding. LSTA funds provide leverage to experiment and learn best practices. LSTA is more flexible than its predecessor, the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), which limited funds to public libraries, building projects, and projects with public library partners. With the LSTA state program, Oregon's library community has much more input and information on how the state uses the funds.

Oregon's LSTA program strives for transparency mainly through the Library Development Services section of the Oregon State Library (OSL) Web site, <http://www.oregon.gov/OSL/LD/grantmainalt.shtml>. The Web site includes information about the LSTA Advisory Council and links to current core documents from the Federal government, Oregon Library Association, and State government. To help potential grant-writers, several years of past grant applications, accompanying materials, and key information, such as funding averages, are available online. Staff also works with grantees to ensure that all forms and information needed are available. Consultants Himmel and Wilson (2007), looking at Oregon's LSTA program, have stated:

One can learn from Oregon that] transparency in regard to the LSTA program can result in a library community that is highly engaged and one that views the state library agency as a partner in pursuit of excellence in library service. The Oregon State Library provides a tremendous amount of detail regarding the LSTA program and the competitive grants that are awarded on its Web site. The consultants believe that Oregon is exemplary in this regard. (p. 31)

LSTA Five-Year Plan

The five-year plan is the bedrock of Oregon's effort to keep the LSTA program responsive. Oregon is required by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which administers LSTA funds, to develop a five-year plan that guides how the state spends its annual grant of around two million dollars. Oregon's current plan is on the Web at <http://www.oregon.gov/OSL/LD/lsta.shtml>. The process of building a new plan starts with the evaluation of the old one. This is important because if a project does not fit into the boundaries of the five-year plan, LSTA funds cannot be used for it.

In 2001 and 2007, the State hired consultants Himmel and Wilson to evaluate the last two plans by conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews with leaders of public, academic, school, and special libraries. The consultants noted themes arising from the 2001 evaluation, "... Participants felt that much remained to be done ... [including funding] licens[ed] databases at the state level" (Appendix B, p. 8).

Ideas gathered from evaluations serve to bridge the old plan and the new. The last two plans started with intensive retreats, including representatives from all types of libraries, library



associations, the OSL Board of Trustees, and the Board's LSTA Advisory Council. Input is integrated into a new draft plan. The State Library posts it on the Web and invites comments. Following that, the plan is discussed by the LSTA Advisory Council, then the Board.

Input Changes the Plan

The 1998–2001 plan did not indicate that shared online information resources was appropriate use of LSTA funds. A failed initiative to get state general fund support for database licensing led to the 2002 Senate Interim Task Force on Library Cooperation. They produced HB12, passed in July 2003, which authorized using LSTA to subsidize statewide database



Does people's input make a difference in the way
LSTA funds are spent? Absolutely.

licensing. Given the feedback in the 2001 evaluation and elsewhere, the 2002–2008 plan was written to allow for LSTA funds to be used for online database licensing, L-net online reference, and digitization projects.

To be funded, items must be allowable under the five-year plan, developed with extensive community input. The comments in the evaluation of 2003–2008 impact the current five-year plan. Comments from focus groups included “More library services should be digitized—downloadable books, for example” (Appendix A, p. 7) and “OverDrive [is] the kind of project that the State Library should be involved in” (Appendix A, p. 8). In response, since 2009, three grants totaling \$250,000 were approved to add downloadable audio, video, and e-books to the state's OverDrive (Library2Go) project.

LSTA Advisory Council

If the five-year state plan is the bedrock of Oregon's LSTA program, then the LSTA Advisory Council is the capstone. The Council oversees the LSTA program, including developing grant guidelines, identifying priorities, and regularly considering the balance of expenditures in all areas of the program. Elected by the OSL Board of Trustees, the thirteen councilors represent library users, public, academic, special, and school libraries, and disadvantaged persons from across Oregon. Since they are drawn from the larger community, it is easy to find and talk to them at conferences, trainings, and in the course of normal business. The State also includes their contact information on its Web site to encourage communication.

Over time, the Council has refined its procedures to create as fair a process as possible. For example, the Council modified the way grants are discussed at their meetings. Currently, the Council discusses a proposal first, with State Library staff adding comments at the end of discussion if requested. All appropriations that are not made in the usual cycle are considered by the Council to recommend to the final authority, the Board of Trustees.



Excavating Best Practice

One area of the LSTA program remains uncovered: gathering and sharing the lessons learned through grant-funded projects. Oregon's LSTA program encourages risk-taking and innova-

tion (Oregon State Library, 2010, p. 2) to learn best practices and try new technologies. One tool that could help is the peer evaluations undergone by competitive grants. Among the evaluation criteria is, “What can be learned from the results of this project?”

To date, the State Library staff has not had time to mine the records for developing best practices. In Fall 2009, volunteer Jane Scheppke started reviewing LSTA files, interviewing project participants, and gathering best practices by topic, beginning with outreach to immigrant and non-English speaking populations. These lists of best practices are sent to past grantees, the Board of Trustees, and library listservs for further comment before the final draft is posted online.

Visible Patterns of Success

While some best practices only apply to specific types of projects, there are patterns of success and failure that become apparent as one reads through past LSTA grants. Libraries may use LSTA money to fund a variety of projects, but the basic formula for success stays remarkably constant. With thorough outreach, smart staffing, and strong community support, libraries across the state have achieved great things with the help of Oregon’s LSTA grant program. Lists of best practices organized by topic would provide prospective grantees with places to start.

The OSL’s LSTA Web site allows potential grant applicants to look over most of the grant applications, progress reports, and peer evaluations submitted in the past ten years (currently, letters of recommendation are not digitized). Here are a few examples of successful grants exemplifying common best practice that every prospective grantee should read.

Cornelius Public Library’s (2008) “Promoting Targeted Library Services to Latinos” took an exemplary approach to outreach and partnerships. After hiring an outreach coordinator who spent lots of time speaking to people throughout the community, the Cornelius Public Library used its new partnerships to build an ambitious outreach program for the city’s large Latino population. While large organizations and civic leaders provided critical support, the success of the program was largely due to many well-documented partnerships with local businesses, media outlets, and influential community members. Smaller libraries that want to “go big” with their outreach may look to this grant as a model.

Portland State University and Oregon Literacy (2004 and 2005) collaborated on “Learner Web,” a portal for adult literacy learners available online, by phone, and in person. The grant provides a good example of how an innovative and somewhat risky program can overcome considerable obstacles and still be successful in the long run thanks to good outreach and solid planning.

The Multnomah County Library (2006) performed an in-depth needs analysis of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Slavic-language speakers in the Portland area, titled “Planning Culturally Appropriate Library Services.” This project is a good example of a planning grant. The results of their research were put into action in 2008 with “This Is How I Use My Library,” an outreach



Libraries with successful projects understand that outreach is ongoing, not just a formality when the library wants to do something new.



project resulting in library “how to” DVDs for groups targeted by the earlier study. Depending on the size of a project and expertise of the library, a planning grant is worth considering.

What We Mean by Best Practice: Outreach

Successful LSTA grant projects are based on a thorough understanding of local needs and positive relationships built between the library and its community. These libraries also understand that strong community relationships may take a long time to cultivate, and that they must only embark on ambitious projects when the public support is there. They build their projects to address documented needs. There is no substitute for comprehensive, face-to-face communication.

To develop relationships, successful libraries allow their staff paid time to leave the library, go into the community, and ask people what they need. By going to community gatherings and clubs, staff spread awareness of the library and build goodwill while gathering information about target populations.

Libraries that wait until after their grants have been approved before doing outreach inevitably spend unanticipated time and money scrambling for answers to why people are unaware of or uninterested in programs. However, libraries that start outreach early have a good chance at achieving long-term success.

Staffing: Paid vs. Volunteers

Volunteers are invaluable to a library. They bring important skills and provide support that few projects could do without. With that in mind, there are pitfalls in using volunteers. Projects may attempt to trim budgets by finding volunteers to fill positions that would otherwise be held by staff. This approach rarely succeeds. Volunteer bases vary from place to place, and there are limits to what volunteers are willing to do without pay. Every time a volunteer leaves, the library must train a replacement. In addition, services offered by volunteers may be inadequate or unequal across populations; for example, an English language storytime could be run on curriculum developed by the children’s librarian, while Vietnamese language storytime is run informally by a volunteer.

While it is possible to run programs entirely on volunteers, the handful of libraries that have succeeded at this have had unusually deep relationships with their volunteer base. More often, libraries with successful programs have cultivated their volunteers through outreach and then assigned volunteers to support tasks based on their strengths while leaving planning and administration to library staff.

Partnerships

The strength of a library’s current relationships can be judged by the letters of recommendation included with the LSTA grant application. These letters can predict the future success of the program. Successful libraries include letters from local organizations who may have a stake in the grant. For example, a project aiming to bring teens and seniors together should include letters from the director of the local senior center, a school principal, a student council president, etc. Each writer will make their own unique case for the program.

Attitudes: or, “We’re the library; what do you need?” vs. “We’re the library! We know what you need!”

Successful libraries approach outreach, staff development, and partnerships ready to listen. They are willing to look critically at the image they project to the community and to revisit



basic policies to better meet the needs of their target population. If the program brings underrepresented populations through library doors, all frontline staff are trained to communicate with these new patrons with respect and sensitivity.

Most of all, generalizations about entire populations are avoided. Successful libraries know that there is no such thing as a “typical member” of any group or an organization that can speak for all of its beneficiaries, and they do not base programs on assumptions that cannot easily be taken back.

Conclusion

The LSTA grant program gives Oregon libraries the chance to experiment and innovate. It has funded many successful projects, including statewide database licensing, Plinkit, and a number of outreach projects. The OSL attempts to make the program as transparent and involve as many people as possible. The difficulty has been in making the lessons learned from grant projects available to the library community. By looking at past grant projects, we have identified best practices common to successful projects. As we look to the future, we continue to depend on wide community involvement in sharing information on LSTA projects. 🌿

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