

LEAD

A Triennial newsletter from the California Library Association Management Interest Group

Letter from the Chair:
Jeff Scott

Welcome to this post-conference holiday edition of LEAD. For those who missed the conference, we have some thorough reviews of some of the most popular programs, including a review of the Management Interest Group's Career Resource Booth in the Exhibit Hall.

Lori Bowen Ayre was reminded of an important point after returning from CLA. When reviewing and purchasing new technology, it's just as much about the service as it is about the technology change. Are you ready?

Hillary Theyer reviews her Hoarders program. I know it was a packed house for this program. Hopefully, this review will help you clean up your desk areas.

I'm contributing my own article for the More Straight Talk program. It was also a packed house and felt like a sermon at times with these rousing speakers!

Betty Waznis, one of our mentors, helped staff our Career Resources Booth and has written up her experience. It was very popular this year and we look to have an even bigger booth next year.

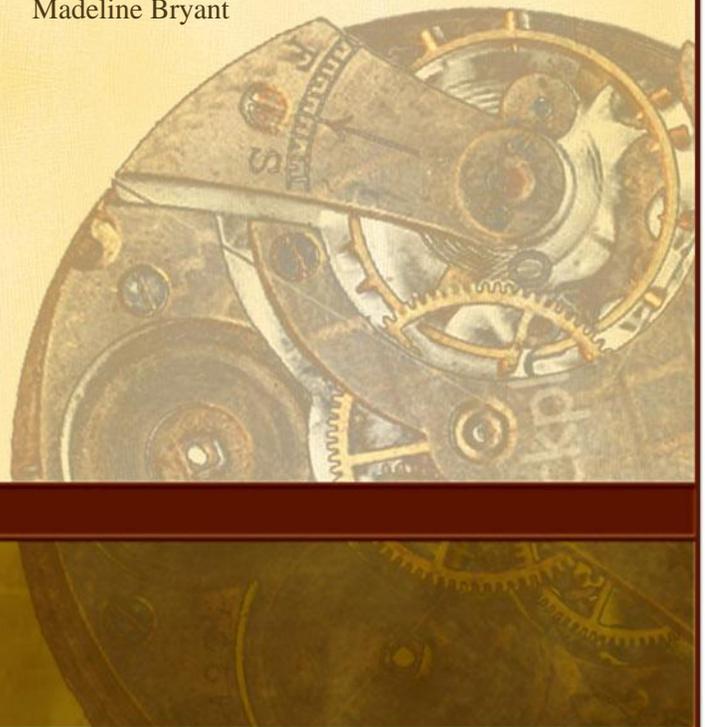
We have a timely article from Laura Einstadter about her Little Free Library project. This trend certainly has legs and it's a suitable project for libraries to get involved.

Lastly, we have the return of "How Do you Manage," Jessica Hudson and Madeline Bryant put their heads together to provide different perspectives on a tricky library problem.

I hope you like this edition and enjoy your holidays!

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Strategic Selection and Implementation of Technology

by Lori Bowen Ayre, Library Technology Consultant / The Galecia Group

I've heard about a lot of RFID and AMH (automated materials handling) projects that have lost their way lately. One of the reasons this happens is that the purpose of choosing the technology gets lost as soon as the equipment arrives. In order to successfully roll out RFID and/or AMH projects, it is critical to establish a clear set of priorities for doing so and to continually make choices based on those priorities.

For example, decisions must be made about how the system will be configured to suit the workflow you want to use. Remodeling may be required to locate equipment where it will be most effective. Signage and patron assistance will be required. Oftentimes circulation policies need to be modified or materials security strategies need to change. What data needs to live on the RFID tag versus the ILS? How many staff workstations need to be RFID-enabled? How many self-checks do you need and where should they be placed? How many will accept cash? And, most importantly, what exactly will staff be doing after all this equipment is in place? Where will the new staff-patron interface points be and what training will be required?

Purchasing equipment doesn't guarantee that anything will change. In fact, many libraries have proven themselves to be quite adept at purchasing very costly AMH and/or RFID systems without changing anything about how they deliver services to their patrons! To be effective, RFID and AMH implementations must be based on a strategic vision that carries through all aspects of the rollout.

Work with staff to establish the need for the change and get their support for making the investment. If they have taken part in creating the strategic vision, they will support the changes that need to be made. Once you've got a vision for what you want to do, establish a clear set of priorities and develop a plan for how the technology helps bring that vision to life. Throughout the implementation, use the vision and your library's priorities as signposts to guide every choice you make. And beware, it's very easy to get distracted by the shiny new machine and lose track of those priorities!

Establish metrics that can be used to measure progress toward your goals. Metrics will tell you whether you need to make adjustments or not. Without metrics, you can't even be sure you've made a change! Are you increasing the number of self-service transactions? Have you freed up staff to do more patron-facing work? Have you reduced the number of touches and streamlined the materials handling workflow? Have you reduced the time it takes to get returns back up on the shelf? Are you making the staffing adjustments you need to make?

Too many libraries think that RFID, sorters, self-check-out machines, and self-check-in machines are magic. They are not magic. They do certain things well and can be used to support changes the library wishes to make in how to deliver services. They can free up staff to do new things. They can create opportunities for patrons to interact with the library differently. But they only play supporting roles. The equipment doesn't make the change happen. The changes have to be made by the people with the vision for how to transform the library, provide new services, change staffing levels, introduce new service models, and streamline workflows.



Hoarders? In Libraries?

By Hillary Theyer, City Librarian Torrance Public Library

The program Hoarders: Library Edition was packed at the CLA Annual Conference, and when the crowd was asked if they were there to help themselves out of a little bit of a “keeping too much stuff” problem, a bunch of hands went up! It’s OK, we won’t use names, but hopefully many audience members went away with at least one tip they could take back to work.

Hoarding is a management problem – and one that can reveal itself in many ways. A therapist started it off by describing the disorder, defined in the DSM 5, and the associated mood or anxiety components. It’s good to know we are not alone!

The program then described institutional hoarding, and what happens when a big building is combined with old furniture, broken equipment, and a desire to “just stash it here, it won’t matter.” Well, it sure does matter, and a brave Director detailed a way out of this culture into a new one.

Clutter in the office is something every librarian (and probably every workplace) has an issue with. But what does your desk say about you? Does the gift clutter, combined with the aspirational clutter, with a dash of the “trash masquerading as clutter” give an impression of incompetence, lead to chaos and lost work, and potentially cost you a client or promotion? It can!

Though it doesn’t lead to rats, dust bunnies, or collapsed storage units, electronic hoarding is a problem, and the threat posed by email, saved document drafts, lost passwords to dead accounts can be costly. Just because it isn’t taking space in an office, doesn’t mean that it isn’t a problem and electronic hoarding is proving a HUGE issue for organizations. If someone dumps three flash drives from their pocket reaching for a coin, and can’t sync their phone because it is full ... they need your help!

All in all, a fun time was had, many personal habits were recognized, and the audience felt better knowing they were not alone in needing to cope with piles of clutter, that dead paperback rack, or the seventeen drafts of the staff manual they should have finished last year. I’m Hillary Theyer, and I’m a Library Hoarder.

More Straight Talk by Jeff Scott, County Librarian, Tulare County Library

I had the honor to host another Straight Talk program with some of the best library minds in the state, Directors: Jose Aponte of San Diego County Library, Julie Farnsworth of Pleasanton Public Library, Robert Karatsu of Rancho Cucamonga Public Library, Jan Sanders of Pasadena Public Library, and Rivkah Sass of Sacramento Public Library, were captivating as they discussed the trials and tribulation of today's modern library director.

I really enjoy putting this program together. Library directors are always so willing to tell their story and to help others. Often, people can be too intimidated by directors, particularly with a group as prestigious as this one. However, they are all incredibly down-to-earth and willing to help. My thought behind providing this program was that I hoped it would not only inspire those new to the profession, but would also demonstrate how human these directors are; they started out just like everyone else. I gathered some notes from the program which were particularly poignant for me.

Don't Follow the Crowd

In their own way, each director had advice on being innovative. Jose Aponte said it was important to look outside of the profession, in some cases getting out of the profession for a time to gain perspective. It leads to a different outlook and attitude when coming back. Robert Karatsu said that the only way to know the future is to change it. If we follow everyone else, we will always fall behind; by taking our own path we can create something new. Julie Farnsworth said that those drawn into being a director must possess a heart-pounding drive to do good things. All members of the group reminded us that politics make strange bedfellows. In order to get things done you have to look to the people to make alliances with and put party politics aside.

Say Yes

It's important to look for opportunities, be willing to say yes, and build a culture of the same, according to Rivkah Sass. It's important to be fearless and be willing to move backwards or sideways in a career in order to make the big leaps forward. I particularly liked Jan Sanders point when she said, "Dragons be damned" emphasizing the importance of pushing through despite heavy opposition. Robert Karatsu further expanded on this by suggesting it is important to stir things up.

One is the Loneliest Number

All of the directors reminded us that it can be very lonely at the top. It's important to know oneself since the ego will be often bruised. One of the most frustrating things, brought up by Julie and Jan, was how the slightest phrase can be taken out of context and twisted. Rivkah had the best comments on the topic stating that words can be twisted, making you out to be a monster. It's important to have a trusted circle. It's also important to be a good poker player.

The real point of this program for me is to allow library directors to speak directly and honestly about how they got where they are, what others can do to be successful, and where the profession is going. While others may panic during budget cuts and a changing climate, these directors have seen it all. The benefit of this experience can be very calming for those new to the profession or experiencing tough times for the first time. I always appreciate their honesty. Even with the same questions, each time it takes a different tack, the less formal the better. Straight Talk is a straight answer about the library field, past, present, and future.

Career Resources Booth

by Betty Waznis Director
Chula Vista Public Library

There's an alternative to wandering around the CLA conference looking for Room 2441--c-3 (Celebration Room) (West) (Annex), fighting for a seat, then either dozing through a dim PowerPoint, or checking your email. Spend a couple of active interesting hours at the Career Resources Booth. Volunteer as a greeter, a resume reviewer, or a mock interview panelist. You'll help a few of our new or transitioning colleagues, update your knowledge of today's job market reality, and add to your listening, mentoring and leadership skills. It's extremely rewarding and I encourage you to try it.

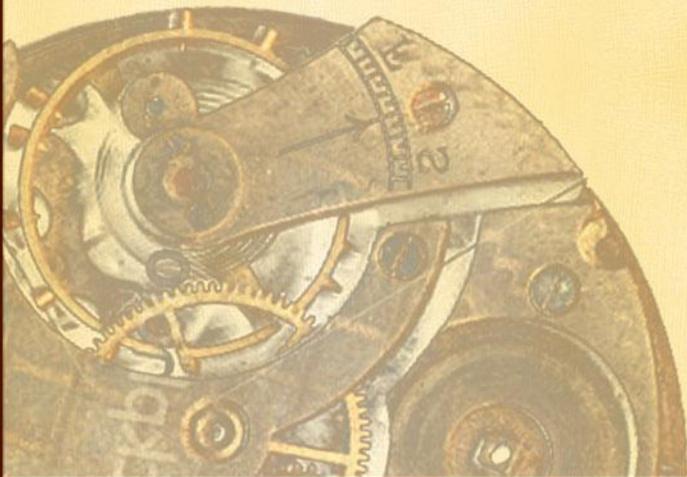
How does it work? Your session is scheduled in advance at your convenience by the competent and helpful volunteer staff that is there to assist you. It's easy to slip this activity in between other programs or meetings. You'll be set up in a private curtained cubicle in a quiet part of the exhibit hall and matched with an enterprising job seeker. They are looking for an objective outside professional to assess their resume or give feedback during a practice interview. In the course of the half hour to 45 minute session, you may talk through their resume, explore their career goals with them, listen to their history, and help them reflect their strengths in the best possible written or verbal way. It's gratifying to encourage these quality candidates, who may just need a little confidence, need some tweaks in wording or emphasis, and who appreciate honest feedback about interview performance.

Haven't you ever interviewed a promising person who you wish had just rambled a little less, or whose resume was a little clearer? You might have wished you could give them advice; here's a setting where you can. Do you ever remember one of your own past interviews and think, "if I knew then what I know now, I could have done so much better"? Give someone else the boost you could have benefitted from. You might be concerned with succession planning –here's an opportunity to get an inside view of today's candidates and position your organization to attract the best and the brightest. You can make a real difference to someone's chance of employment and meet some great people at the same time.

ELF 2.0 Pre-Conference

Kimberlee Wheeler Youth Services Paradise Branch Library

The ELF 2.0 pre-conference began on Friday evening and continued through Sunday morning and included many great presenters, including Dr. Joshua Sparrow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, children's musician and educator, Francie Dillon, and PlayPower founder, Sharon Krull. Many other presenters created a wonderful opportunity for grantees to learn about early childhood development and best practices for supporting families with young children in the library. Workshops highlighted brain development in children, the Touchpoints philosophy Dr. Terry Brazelton, and, delightfully effective strategies for creative play. The pre-conference ended with an offer of targeted grant opportunities, as well as a closing panel on digital storytelling techniques and technology for children. The entire effort was a resounding success and inspired those who were able to attend.



Amador County Library's Little Library Project by Laura Einstadter, County Librarian, Amador County Library

How do you provide library service to areas of a rural county with limited funding and staffing? Are there unique ways to increase reading and literacy in communities not currently receiving traditional library services?

Luckily I didn't have to think about these questions for very long. About a year ago I was approached by one of the movers and shakers in the community and asked if I might be familiar with the Little Free Library concept. On a visit to family in Wisconsin she had seen this little neighborhood library and thought wow what a neat concept I bet that would work in Amador County.

We met and discussed the idea. We decided to partner with the local arts council as a way to bring art and libraries to some of the more remote communities in Amador County.

Around the same time the "Pitch an Idea" grant application time became available. We pitched the idea with the hope of being able to extend library services in our targeted areas. The State Library liked our idea and granted funding for us to proceed.

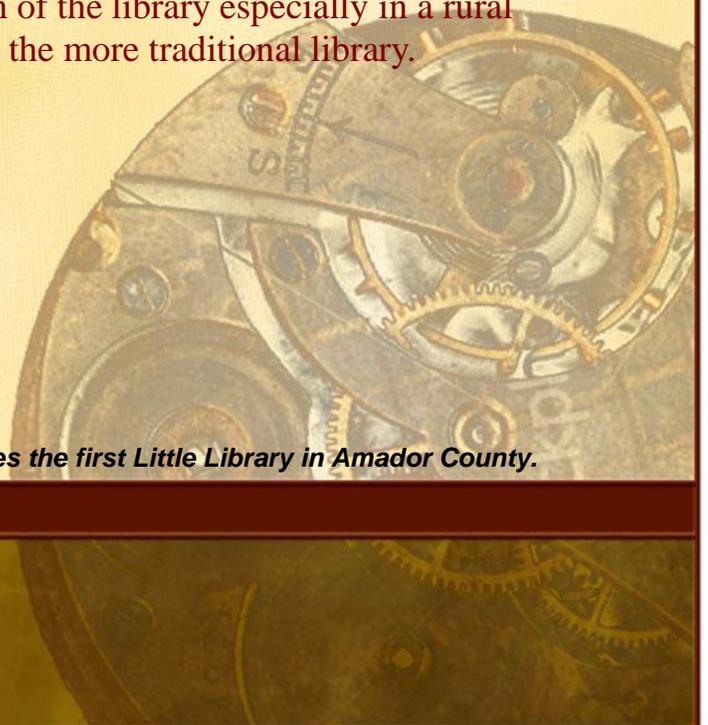
Over the past several months we have met with members of the local communities, obtained permission to locate the libraries in the targeted areas, ordered the little libraries, put the libraries together, developed small collections for each library and delivered each of the libraries to their respective locations.

The first Little Library was installed at the town center in River Pines on November 16th, bringing the library to a community that did not have a library before. The community has embraced the library and made it a part of their daily activities.

For anyone who is thinking about expanding the reach of the library especially in a rural environment the Little Library is a great alternative to the more traditional library.



River Pines receives the first Little Library in Amador County.



How Do You Manage?

Your library offers story time once a week. Registration is not required since the numbers of attendees are usually under 20. Most of the story times are attended by the same or similar group of young children (ages 0-4) however every few weeks a group of 4-5 'challenged' students and their teacher join the mix. Although the students do not stay for the craft they are present for the stories. Several of the mothers have commented that they don't like the children coming to the story times because they can be loud and sometimes make 'strange sounds' frightening the younger children.

Speaking to the teacher in the past to determine when the students will be coming hasn't changed the surprise visits. You don't want to discourage the students from attending but you also don't want the younger children and their parents to stop coming either.

How do you address this in a fair and equitable manner?

Jessica Hudson, County Librarian, Nevada County Library

This is a great question for a new library manager or children's services supervisor to really ponder on because the answers can vary wildly depending on how you react to the situation. For myself, I would tend to fall back on a guiding principle that we follow as librarians-that everyone should be able to access information. I count story time as a form of information and thus, anyone who follows the basic codes of conduct should be allowed to participate. This particular instance creates the conundrum that both groups are trying to access the information, the ongoing parents and the teachers with challenged students, and are being stymied in one form or another.

My first reaction would be to speak with the teacher again regarding the group visits. I would either suggest that she have her group sit closer to the front, so that noises are not directed at the other groups of children, or that they might consider getting into the program earlier, so that the children can get settled and comfortable in the space in advance of everyone else arriving.

I would then speak with some of the parents that have concerns regarding the group. I would talk with them about what a great learning opportunity this is for their children to engage with other children that are different from themselves and to see what they can take away from the experience or see if maybe their children can become friends, to make the program less tense. Children are adaptable-it's more the parents that have the issues. As long as you can share with the parents of the ongoing story time attendees that the class groups are trying to be more quiet by sitting up front/arriving early and that their children could end up enjoying the program together, you should have a better situation on your hands.

Madeline Bryant, Senior Librarian, Children's Literature Department, Los Angeles Public Library

Any class or group (challenged or otherwise) showing up unannounced for a regular storytime is inappropriate. At LAPL when we advertise our programs, we recommend that classes and groups of over 5 people call ahead to make arrangements with a librarian. This is indicated on all handouts and fliers. We are more than happy to do programs for individual groups or classes with advance notice. I would speak with the teacher again and offer alternative solutions or an incentive for calling ahead. If staffing allows, we could provide a separate storytime (perhaps even simultaneously) for the challenged students that might better address their needs. I would stress that this is a special service that we offer and make it sound better than the current storytime they are attending. I might also at the same time see if we could incorporate some programming techniques into our regular storytime that might address the needs of the challenged students. Perhaps this would familiarize the regular attendees with being around the other children.

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Want to be a member, let us know! jdscott@co.tulare.ca.us

