

# Newberg Public Library Board Meeting

TUESDAY May 20, 1997  
7:15 p.m.

Newberg Public Library  
Rotary Room

*Please call 537-1256 if you are unable to attend*

## AGENDA

- I. Call to Order - Donna Read
  
  - II. Consent Calendar
    - A. Minutes - April 15, 1997
  
    - B. Statistical Reports - April 1997 (will be distributed at meeting)
  
  - III. Business
    - A. Measure 47/Measure 50 Update
  
    - B. Library Budget Review
  
    - C. Discussion of 1998-2003 Long Range Planning Process  
Libraries of the Future
  
  - IV. Library Director's Report
    - A. Written monthly report
  
  - VI. Items for Next Month's Agenda
- Packet Contents:  
Agenda  
Board Minutes*
- VI. Adjournment

**5** Levels of service will be developed that will be independent of technology but will be based instead on staff time required.

**6** Fee-based, interactive research services will be developed.

When these predictions were made it was common for libraries to charge for computer searches because they were costly and many still regarded them as an ancillary service. The forecasts predicted a time when computer searches would be as normal as looking for the answer to a reference question in a book. That time has surely arrived. More and more libraries provide free Internet access to their users. Today a great deal of information is only available electronically, and charging for electronic access would be as antithetical to the library's mission as charging to read a newspaper or check out a book. The issue is—and has always been—equity.

The forecasts did come true to some extent as some libraries do charge for subsets of services based on staff time involved rather than computer connect time. While there is still debate about whether a public library should charge for any reference service, those that do charge tend to base their fees on the time it takes to provide the service, with some additional cost recovery for computer connect time when there is a discrete charge for it.

At CPL our decision to provide a fee-based service was predicated on our goal to be the first place anyone thinks to go for any information at all. Rather than turn people away who want time-consuming and specialized research, we chose to provide the service for a fee. Businesses are the most frequent users of the service, mostly because they would rather pay us than do the research themselves.

**7** A new job title of "information specialist" will be introduced into the public library.

This was a silly attempt to capture the notion that librarians did more than handle books. It is sillier now. Today librarians find answers to questions in whatever format they exist, and there is a noticeable return to the earlier image of a librarian as a wise person, a navigator, a guide through the maze of ignorance. Today the role of that kind of librarian, with its history and substance, is much more appealing than that of an information techie.

**8** Book circulation will continue to be an important part of library services.

Yes, but.... There is no question that books and electronic resources will work together in libraries to communicate knowledge, not just information. The use of book lending counts—circulation statistics as the measure of library activity—will and should be abandoned.

**9** Public libraries will not only survive, they will flourish.

In the past ten years, public libraries have been through some bad times but have not just survived, they have flourished. Even as the pundits of the virtual future predict the disappearance of libraries in the vapors of cyberspace, citizens all across the country are rebuilding their libraries. Los Angeles, Denver, San Francisco, Chicago, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Cleveland, to mention only a few, have built big, new, contemporary main library buildings. It is a tribute to the public's view of what is the best investment of public dollars. Great new libraries are symbols of the importance of knowledge and learning. Can all these citizens be wrong? Certainly not.

## THE DECADE AHEAD

If technology has been the driving force for change over the last decade, the driving force for the coming decade is more technology. The mission of the library—to provide access to information for everyone in the community when and where the individual needs it—remains intact. While different libraries articulate their missions to emphasize different aspects of their service, they continue to be more alike than different. That is good. People across the country recognize a common library mission, and they celebrate it time after time, in place after place, when they vote to build and support more, better public libraries.

Although the library mission stays the same, the way we achieve it has changed dramatically and that will change even more dramatically in the decade ahead. To see the future, put that traditional public library mission into a modern, electronic world. Then the issues of the future emerge.

### Collection building and organization

The emphasis on access over ownership will continue. While electronic access is unlikely to replace the book collection in the near future (or ever), some categories of information and knowledge will become totally digital. Data (statistics, lists, stock market quotations, anything that is immediate, changing, hard to keep up with in print, and distinct—requiring no abstract or conceptual thought) will go electronic. Digital sources will be used for information specific to one person or institution (homepages that provide more localized information than would be economical to print and distribute widely). Primary source material unavailable to casual researchers or students because of the fragile nature of the material or the remoteness of the holdings will be available in electronic formats. Articles now published in scholarly journals will be disseminated online. Electronic access to these materials, supplemented by network access to the print holdings of libraries anywhere, will bring new information riches within the grasp of every elementary, high school, and college student and their parents and teachers.

In the next decade the current chaos of the Internet and WWW will become better organized. The job may be accomplished by library consortia or by commercial vendors. Without better organization, the vast information highway will become one long, boring traffic jam.

Librarians have long excelled at organizing knowledge. Many argue that the Internet and the web are a new paradigm and that organization will slowly emerge out of chaos; that systematic classification of knowledge is outmoded, and Boolean search capabilities, hypertext, expert systems, and their cousins will revolutionize the way we think about the organization of knowledge. That may be true, but so far it seems that the more there is on the web, the harder it is to find. Lately, even simple searches yield many hundreds of hits, most of which have nothing to do with the subject being searched. New search engines are beginning to look more and more like old classification schemes in electronic clothing. While the graphics are from *Star Wars*®, the content is from LC.

### Preservation and access

In the next few years a centralized service will be developed to warehouse backup tapes, preservation microfilm, or even paper, as a kind of insurance policy against the possibility of digital deletion.

Electronic preservation is an increasingly troubling issue

for the whole profession. Electronic journals (journals initially published in electronic format) are not necessarily retained by their publishers. The paper originals of materials published initially in print and later digitized are often discarded since one reason to digitize is to save space. Yet preservation librarians worry about the long-term stability of the electronic medium. No one really knows how long it will last, or if it makes sense to institute conversions as soon as each new format becomes obsolete.

There is widespread concern about the loss of a paper trail as E-mail replaces paper and vanishes at the touch of a "delete" key. You don't have to be a Luddite to fear that we are in danger of losing our history.

The reemergence of reading rooms, especially in public libraries, will be the result of library efforts to fulfill the longstanding mission to provide equity of access to information for all citizens. This was a fundamental purpose for the founding of U.S. public libraries. Public libraries and democratic governments have always walked hand in hand, and equity of access is their most important concern.

One can envision, indeed one can already see in some places banks of PCs where study tables once stood. Students and adults of all ages increasingly spend time in the library reading the information provided via the Internet.

Because so much is available only electronically, libraries must provide the electronic connection just as they once provided books for those who could not afford to buy them. The current situation is analogous to the one we had at the beginning of this century, when people came to libraries to read—not just to borrow material but actually to read the material.

### Libraries as publishers

Libraries are likely to become electronic publishers of information, as they work with local government and other organizations to digitize public documents. At CPL, we have already posted candidate information provided by the League of Women Voters and are working with a local hospital watchdog group to mount information about the performance of local hospitals. We are also exploring the possibility of listing city information about real estate transactions and are beginning to digitize local history documents.

### Copyright

Reasoned negotiations will ultimately replace the hostile posturing that marks the differences between copyright "owners" and the library, research, and education communities. The greatest impediment to realizing the promise of digitization and electronic transmission is copyright. Article I of the Constitution states that the Congress can secure "for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries..." in order "to promote the progress of science and useful arts..."

Few would argue with the wisdom of that enactment, but when electronic technologies are used to store and transmit documents, definitions become blurred. The Association of American Publishers has argued that any electronic transmission of a document is a copy, protected by copyright law, and subject to copyright payment. Various library groups have ar-

gued that the fair use doctrine, which permits limited copying under carefully constrained circumstances, enables less restricted copying for education and scholarship. Both sides claim they are pursuing the constitutional mandate to "promote the progress of science and the useful arts." To date, both sides of the copyright debate have maintained and even toughened their positions. The litigation that has occurred so far has not provided a definitive way out of the copyright war. Ultimately, the various stakeholders will have to reason together, since neither can afford to fight out the remaining differences in court.

### Training and measurement

Libraries will spend increasing amounts on training. In fact, any library that spends significant amounts on hardware, software, and communications lines without investing in staff training is throwing money away. As the rate of change in technology continues unabated, we find that we must replace equipment every two to three years. In Cleveland that means we must retrain staff every year. If staff are uncomfortable with new technology, they will feel threatened. If staff are comfortable with new tools, they will feel empowered by them, and they will be able to help the public use them effectively.

Library staff will find new ways to measure and report the massive change in the way people now use libraries. Because the public is accustomed to thinking about circulation, we will be best served by incorporating electronic circulation into traditional circulation figures.

When a student does research today, he or she searches magazines online and prints out copies of the articles wanted. The student may go on to search other databases and print out the findings. The student gets much more information than with traditional print sources, but the library credits itself with no circulations at all. The library has done a better job meeting the student's needs than it did five years ago, but when it is compared statistically with other libraries, it looks as if it is falling behind.

### We'd invent them

The Council on Library Resources (CLR) received 292 responses to a recent request for information on the use of electronic technologies in public libraries. They came from libraries of all sizes nationwide and told of low-cost projects and regional transformations of library service. Case studies on 12 sites are being drafted by CLR staff for publication to the profession. As chair of the committee overseeing this effort, I was impressed by the range and extent of activity in large and small, rural and urban, rich and poor libraries—in libraries of every location and description imaginable. Libraries are not only willing to change, they are on the cutting edge in applying technology.

Public librarians have discovered, no, created and built both the infrastructure and the local systems to bring information and knowledge in print and on the screen to the people in their communities. So crucial is this role that if public libraries did not already exist, we would have to invent them.



### The use of book circulation statistics as the measure of library activity will and should be abandoned