

Humor Us: Librarians and Laughter

Librarians and laughter; do you consider this a non sequitur? If so, hopefully this issue of *Oregon Library Association Quarterly* will change your mind.

Those of us in the profession face a number of challenges: we work in a constantly changing and increasingly technical environment; face escalating costs yet still provide cutting edge services with shrinking budgets; are often stereotyped; and we must meet the needs of our sometimes challenging patrons. Humor is a necessary ingredient in everyone's life, particularly those of us who work in libraries. There is no single way to maintain a sense of humor or incorporate humor into our lives and I hope you will enjoy the variety of solutions presented by contributors to this issue of *OLA Quarterly*.

One way to infuse your life with humor is to schedule it in your calendar. See what librarians were doing in 1922 at Oregon Agricultural College in a photo and caption forwarded by Elizabeth Nielsen. Or, consider the University of Oregon where librarians and staff set aside an afternoon at the end of every spring term to host the "Gonzo Review" as described by Leslie Bennett and Aimee Yogi in "Gonzo at the UO Libraries."

One key element in a sense of humor is to be able to laugh at ourselves. Nancy Pearl wrote her essay "My Life as an Action Figure" for *Swivel* Magazine and the *Swivel* editor transformed it into the comic drawn by Christine Olsen, reproduced here with Nancy's original essay. As you can see, we need not be stand up comedians or comic strip authors to express our wit! We are also fortunate to have a contribution from Ruth Kneale titled "But You Don't Look Like a Librarian." Ruth has researched the image of librarians and is a sought after speaker on this topic.

Maintaining a sense of humor under pressure is a true sign that we are coping well. Joe K. Stephens wrote his fictitious "Cancellations Librarian" position announcement when faced with the need to cancel resources due to spiraling costs. Mr. Stephens also published a serious treatment of the same subject illustrating that professionalism and humor are not mutually exclusive. "It's No Laughing Matter" by Kris Anderson describes humorous moments during the aftermath of the devastating University of Hawaii mudslide and is a wonderful glimpse of dedication and camaraderie, all with a sense of humor.

What better way to stay healthy and upbeat than to find humor in your day-to-day encounters? Jey Wenn has written a wonderfully amusing account of life amid government documents in "What's So Funny About Government Documents?" As a Science Librarian I wanted to look a bit more closely at the scientific evidence behind that often used phrase "Laughter is the best medicine" and have reported my findings here as well.

Finally, what library publication would be complete without bibliographies? Janet Webster and I offer up an annotated list of web sites in "News to Us" and "Humor Lust," is an obvious tribute to Nancy Pearl's "Book Lust."

There are many options when it comes to having humor in your life so pick what works for you, and surround yourself with appropriate, positive humor.

—Barbara Butler, *Guest Editor*
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