

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

November 2003

Elections are over; results are in - and, while results may be mixed, we can take heart that two significant library elections prevailed: Sno-Isle and Mid-Columbia. Good omens? Let us hope.

The long-term implications of the EMS levy failure remain to be assessed, however repercussions, *vis-à-vis* the FY 2004 budget, are immediate: we must live with the 7% budget cuts. Is the fate of a new library for Bellingham tied to the resolution of this issue? Contentious questions with no easy answers await your thoughtful considerations and consequent actions. Somehow we must ensure that process is attended by progress; somehow we must persuade City Council, and, respectively, the citizenry that a new facility will not only enhance the delivery of library services, but also do so more efficiently and cost effectively.

Department Heads presented budget requests to City Council during the evenings of November 12th and 13th. There is little doubt the effects of this very difficult exercise have caused managers to rethink all aspects of missions, priorities, goals and objectives. Service demands continue to increase, not only for the library, but also for fire, police, judicial services, and parks. Can demands for service be reconciled with provisions of that service, or, are there real limits or thresholds that must be determined? Hard realities; tough choices.

It appears that we are on the way to a most favorable contract with DYNIX. Sue Epstein, one of the most respected automation consultants in library land, arrives Wednesday afternoon to negotiate the contract. With luck, we may be through by the first week in December. As we pour over the contents, performance requirements, nuances and parenthetical asides, I can only reflect on how advanced systems have become over the last twenty-five years and how much more power the dollar buys. Of course that necessitates wiring upgrades and memory intensive computers. Money is only irrelevant if you have it! But, we planned for those contingencies; all site preparation will be completed before year's end.

Joan Airoidi, Director of Whatcom County Library System, and I are reviewing and reworking our interlocal agreement both to clarify and memorialize some of our contract provisions. Much has changed since 1986 when the basis for reciprocal borrowing between the two systems was first explored and much of the documentation exists in disparate memos, agreements and letters. It seems a timely and appropriate project.

On a more visceral level, we are planning improvements to the loading dock. If a picture is worth a thousand words, an experience can be contracted to five or six. Visits with the Outreach staff were persuasive. Rolling down a seven-degree slope with a 400-pound cart requires strength and restraint, mildly on the order of "You've got to be kidding." Prayers are also in order; that these ladies have survived without accident is amazing.

On Thursday evening, October 23rd, Scott Ocheltree "Magician Extraordinaire" performed his feats before a packed Lecture Room audience. Approximately 65 adults and 85 appropriately aged children watched attentively as Scott wove his magic. From time to time, our magician called out to the audience for assistants who willingly ventured up front to be included in the show. This is the kind of crowd we hope to continue to attract to our "families with school age children" programs.

Thursday Night Spotlight steps aside now for We Share A Story events, but returns on Thursday, January 22, 2004. Margaret Read MacDonald, accompanied by Richard Scholtz, will take the

"stage" (I only wish we had one!) to kick off the first of four in the Thursday Night Spotlight 2004 series. The Friends have really stepped up to the plate to sponsor these events and we are deeply appreciative.

Statistics soar, here and at Fairhaven. Kudos to a truly terrific staff; they are consummately professional.