

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April 2003

RFPs, Annual Reports, building programs, surveys, council meetings, BUDGET. A month of Sundays would be a welcome respite! ...but that seems slated for a far distant future.

Positive news, a rarity of late, surfaced: the state library escaped dissolution, though not without grave reductions. The opportunity to hone, improve, redefine, and test services is one that affords Washington State Library a chance to demonstrate its relevance not only to libraries but to the larger community and the legislative bodies it serves.

SSB 5242, the filtering bill, died in committee as did SSB 5150, the bill providing for the election of trustees. Both bills were seriously flawed, though both will doubtless be brought forward in the next session. The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, once again, nixed the federal counterpart to the state filtering bill as unconstitutional.

At the local level City Council narrowly endorsed a resolution that seeks to provide review and support to those employees approached for confidential information under the mantle of the U.S.A. Patriot Act. Though well intentioned, the resolution poses a classic *Catch 22* dilemma for the individual who chooses to disclose such a request.

The development of an RFP for a new library automation system lumbered apace in fits and starts for a couple of months but now has focus, direction and clear understanding – a timely happenstance, since, this week, we received of an “end-of-life” announcement for a major hardware component. There is both joy and frustration in shared systems and for the committees that attend such endeavors.

The SURVEY, following many staff discussions as well as last month’s Board discussion, was finalized and printed for distribution. The Friends kindly offered to include a copy in their newsletter, which happened to be going out concurrently. As you will recall, library users were asked for their preferences and suggestions for meeting the mandated budget reductions.

Data is being tabbed and correlated at this writing. The survey, conducted during the first two weeks in April, will be repeated this summer and perhaps again in the fall. The response has been amazing – and gratifying. There is little doubt this beloved institution could raise its own army of committed defenders if asked. Preliminary results will be dispensed at the Board meeting.

While the 2004 budget looms before us, with implications not entirely felicitous, we can, I believe, meet the challenges implied, without severely compromising our core mission. Perhaps we will find better ways of doing more with less. Perhaps we will begin to develop and promote collaborations that will benefit the entire community. Perhaps the gold anticipates discovery. As many of the staff have noted, we’ve been there, done this – and survived.

The Annual Report for 2002 awaits only some brief narrative, to be finished by next week. Rethinking the proposed “Millennial Report” suggests that a countdown to the Bellingham Centennial might be more timely i.e. a summation of a century of Bellingham Public Library history through 2003 to be released in 2004. In going through old scrapbooks, reviewing both national and local trends, identifying patterns of use and growth, revisiting the past and anticipating the future, there appears an opportunity to develop a report that could also be deployed as the story behind a new library. It would seem improvident not to so use this opportunity.

“The Architects” a.k.a. the local R/UDAT coterie have worked intensely and intensively with staff to develop a library building program statement worthy of a system far larger than ours. We have dreamed

big whilst they writ large. You are invited to dream with us in our last session with them, a full staff charette, in the Lecture Room, Wednesday, April 16th, from 8:00 a.m. 'til 11:00 a.m.. Coffee, juice, and sundry goodies will be served to nourish the imagination and free flow of ideas. They will wrap up with a Board presentation either as a special session or at the next regular meeting.

And, finally, one more piece of exciting news – Tim Farris, a local attorney who enjoys an outstanding reputation both as a lawyer and a community leader, has agreed to co-chair our ballot measure campaign. How fortunate we are.