Virginia Libraries

Treasures Found by Seafaring Librarians

Also: A Place for Everything: Everything in Its Place • Creating Your Own Internships
The Partnership between Public Libraries and Public Education
Breast Cancer Awareness Is More Than a Pink Ribbon • Virginia's Emerging Leaders

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On the cover: The MV *Explorer* near the coast of Croatia. Story on page 7. Photo courtesy of Semester at Sea Communications Office.

Virginia Libraries

COLUMNS

FEATURES

OPENERS

A Place for Everything: Everything in Its Place

by Cy Dillon

H ave you ever been tempted, when asked where your library is, to say "Everywhere?" It would be an honest, if not particularly helpful, response. Most libraries now have more information available 24-7 on the Internet than during operating hours on the shelves. The resources of Stanley Library are available anywhere on campus through a robust network and worldwide through our proxy server. Telephone reference help and email interactions are part of our routine, and global reach is now the norm even for small academic libraries.

At the same time, we have more students and faculty using the building than ever. They love the wireless access, the comfortable chairs, the group study areas, the faculty and staff on hand to help with anything from a complex research problem to finding the coffee, the availability of up-to-date computers, and—especially—the printers. Getting to be everywhere and, at the same time, where we have always been has required six or seven years of planning, construction, and reallocation of space, beginning with the addition of a classroom wing in 2002–2003. While we have been fortunate to have more funding than originally expected, our experiences have certainly been similar to those at small private colleges around the country. I offer this description of what we have done not as an example of best practices, but rather as a case study of the changes typical for academic libraries over the past decade.

In the fall semester of 2003 Ferrum opened the Stanley Library Annex, a 10,000-square-foot complex of classrooms with a computer lab, small auditorium, student lounge, and the college boardroom included as well. At the same time we abandoned our one point of entry/exit layout, installed upgraded security gates and cam-

> At first we were surprised that students were perfectly comfortable studying in an area that was not particularly quiet….

eras, and opened the main floor to through traffic. This combination of new teaching and learning spaces and dramatically increased student and faculty traffic set the stage for changes to the main floor of the library—and to the academic and social activity there. The ten computers in our central reference area immediately became the most heavily used machines on campus and gave us more access to students than we had expected. Folks stopping to check their email or download documents from the course management system found it easy to ask the nearby librarian for help with assignments. Adding tables for group study and removing individual carrels gave us more seating

capacity and an area that attracted students who took advantage of increased wireless connectivity or simply studied together. At first we were surprised that students were perfectly comfortable studying in an area that was not particularly quiet and had many potential distractions, but we have come to take this comfort with a bustling location for granted. Nevertheless, as we adjusted to the new conditions, we added computer workstations away from the traffic flow and began to explore the possibility of taking out shelving after more than thirty years of adding ranges to accommodate a growing collection. We knew there was unrealized potential for connecting services to students in this open learning environment, but we were not quite sure what services or how to present them.

Our concerns were shared by many academic librarians and administrators, and the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) responded with a national effort to help institutions develop solutions. A pair of travel grants from CIC helped us send teams to two workshops that exposed us to ideas from around the country and gave us the opportunity to collaborate on a strategy for making the most of our opportunity to access students. In 2005 our team of CAO, library director, and instructional technologist attended the Transforming the College Library workshop in Chicago. There we learned what other institutions were doing to develop information literacy as part of their curriculum, and how technological

change was making new demands on libraries and library space. Our success in drafting and implementing an information literacy program for the college made us eager to work with CIC again in 2007 when we had the opportunity to attend the CIC-NITLE Learning Spaces & Technology Workshop in Tacoma, Washington. This conference at the University of Puget Sound was transformative for the participants from Ferrum College—the CAO, CIO, Academic Resources Center (ARC) director, and library director—and we returned to campus with a vision for an integrated, technology-intensive set of learning spaces that has been almost completely realized as we approach 2009.

Before the experience in Tacoma, we had planned to dedicate some available space on the ground floor to a Writing Center and Math Center, but we expanded goals for our next building renovation to include redesigned spaces for the full range of academic support services offered at the college. Our exposure to successful projects, innovative academic administrators, and knowledgeable architects, combined with planning time free of the distractions of campus business, led us to understand that we needed to try to create attractive, accessible learning settings in the prime real estate of our library/academic resources building, and that we should look at the organization of office and other resource space from the point of view of the students we serve. For instance, we learned that Writing and Math centers would be used more if they were in full view of the hundreds of students who pass through the main floor of the library every day. Before the workshop, we assumed that students seeking help from faculty wanted privacy, and that these centers should be out of the sight of the heaviest traffic. The dramatic increase we have recorded in the use of these two centers fully justifies designating a few hundred

The Writing Center now occupies prime space in Stanley Library's reference room.

square feet of the main floor of our library for these uses.

The four Ferrum participants left the workshop with a plan that included creating the two centers discussed above, relocating all the offices and computer labs in our Academic Resources Center, dramatically expanding our peer tutoring program using spaces in the library and ARC, and establishing a computer help desk as part of our academic support facility. Ferrum's president enthusiastically approved the plan and insisted that we compress the timeline to open the Writing and Math centers in their new locations by the beginning of the fall semester of 2007. She also suggested the best location for our Math Center and helped design the space and its furnishings.

During the summer of 2007 the library staff identified thousands of volumes of back issues of journals

that could be replaced by JSTOR access, cancelled these volumes, removed two ranges of shelving, moved another range from the serials area to the reference room, relocated thirteen microfilm storage cabinets, and gathered appropriate tables and chairs to create the Math and Writing Center spaces. This process will undoubtedly sound familiar to many academic librarians at smaller institutions. Faculty members were assigned to both centers for approximately twenty-five hours per week, including some evening hours. With their high visibility and attractive settings, both centers enjoyed good attendance from the start, with the Math Center becoming a popular gathering place for mathematics students even when faculty were not on duty. The comfortable furniture, wireless network access, and ample white board draw stu-

dents during all of the nearly one hundred hours per week that the library is open. One of the most impressive outcomes of our renovation is the more than 400 sessions Writing Center faculty recorded helping students in the fall semester of 2008. In 2006 only four or five students a day used the center.

That same summer the library director, ARC director, CAO, and Development Office worked on a plan to fund a major renovation of the ARC offices and computer labs—all on the ground floor of the library building—in the summer of 2008. With support from the Butz Family Foundation and the Stanley Library endowment, sufficient funds were made available for the renovation. Knowing that this would fund most of the changes planned for the space, the library staff cleared out ground floor space formerly devoted to media equipment during the fall of 2007, and the Computer Help Desk, which had previously been in the basement of the administration building, was installed there in January 2008. It, along with the new Math and Writing centers, experienced increasing student traffic through the spring of 2008.

The ARC director and library director then consulted with the Ferrum College architect to draw up a two-stage plan for the library ground floor renovation. The blueprint for the project was approved by the administration, and in May 2008 renovation began in the ARC, removing offices from the perimeter of the space and consolidating them around a receptionist's office featuring windows visible to students entering the facility. This opened up study areas adjacent to large windows overlooking a patio and the college lake, making the whole floor more attractive while creating easy access to the staff offices. The area that once housed a traditional audiovisual department, eliminated by moving cir-

The Math Center is an ideal spot for small groups of students to interact with faculty.

culating equipment and software to the main floor circulation desk, became the perfect location for our computer services Help Desk, located just down the hall from the ARC offices. At the same time our Disabilities Services office and computer lab were moved and redesigned to gain space, increase privacy, and avoid noise from tutoring sessions. During this period the library staff also consolidated two archives and rearranged book-stack study areas to create more group study tables in areas with wireless network access. We were also able to take advantage of a former projection room that was converted to a storage area for two thousand VHS cassettes, freeing up more space for an expanding DVD collection. With excellent coordination by our physical plant staff, our contractors completed all this plus moving a sixteen-seat computer lab by the end of August. This leaves only permanently relocating that lab to finish our plan for the ground floor.

Looking back at our application to attend the second CIC workshop, composed in October 2006, indicates that we had much lower expectations for both the workshop and our project than we have realized. Beginning with a few good ideas and an understanding that we needed to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the concentration of student activity in the library, we were able to agree on a plan and complete a complex project in a very short time. Our success is based on learning three things:

(1) Coordination and cooperative planning for all areas of academic support are a must for an institution that needs to act effectively and economically.

(2) All projects in creating learning spaces—and the whole campus should be made up of learning spaces—must be imagined from the students' point of view with the understanding that what succeeds for one generation of students may fail for the next.

(3) Accessibility and visibility drive use of student services—at least for this generation.

So, even though our library is everywhere, it is also right where it has been all along. It's just that now students really find some "there" there. **VL**

OPENERS

Creating Your Own Internships

by Lyn C. A. Gardner

Without a library school in Virginia, students attending distance education programs might feel that there are limited feasible internship possibilities. However, many schools, like my alma mater Florida State University (FSU), are actually quite open to students taking the initiative, contacting local libraries, and creating their own internships. This is a great chance for the student to explore a specific area of library science in which the student is considering a career, thus gaining both a better sense of whether this is the desired specialty and providing some of that all-important experience when it comes time to apply for full-time jobs.

In addition, this is an important opportunity for libraries, particularly now, when economic circumstances frequently mean that there are less funds or staff hours available for completing special projects. Librarians can choose to take the first step by contacting some of the distance education programs which Virginia students might be likely to attend and registering their library or project for consideration. While a certain amount of training is involved, graduate student workers are likely to be intelligent and dedicated, with an enthusiasm for the field that has led them to find ways to earn a degree despite the lack of Virginia offerings.

Having long been fascinated by the collections in special libraries, I approached a museum library near my home. The Mariners' Museum (TMM) technical services librarian and archives team were both happy to work with me, providing oversight and training. Their ready suggestion of projects indicated that they actually had quite a number of activities that would have benefitted from the assistance of interns. The process

> **…graduate student workers are likely to be intelligent and dedicated, with an enthusiasm for the field….**

for qualifying this site and registering my internships was quite simple. After confirming with the FSU internship coordinator that local internships were possible, I discussed the details with my two supervisors for the two separate projects at TMM. Then I provided them with the link to the online FSU questionnaire that would allow them to register the site. This included a brief summary of each project, with a description of the process and expected outcome. For each internship, my mentors spent about five hours total in training and oversight; in return, I was able to contribute between fifty to sixty hours of work toward the advancement of each project.

The first project, for Technical Services Librarian Lisa DuVernay, involved the cleanup of "in" analytics. The library's catalog posed certain problems. Designed by museum professionals as a comprehensive catalog for library items, archival materials, and museum artifacts, the catalog lacked full MARC functionality; further, in the retrospective conversion phase, the library had hired temporary typists to enter the records at speed, providing keyword-search functionality but neither authority control nor a check on the duplication of records due to separate subject, title, and author cards. The project provided a lot of first-hand training in constructing and checking subject headings and other access points. In addition to learning to use cataloging resources such as Classification Plus, the LC Subject Cataloging Manuals, and the Data Research Associates (DRA) site, I also learned to think creatively about what sorts of searches patrons at a maritime research library might be likely to enter, and to use local sources to create and check authority files, such as *Aak to Zumbra: A Dictionary of the World's Watercraft*, *Brassey's Book of Battles*, and other nautical dictionaries and gazetteers. Because many of the analytic records were created with few subject access points (and those that did exist were often not in the approved LCSH form), research was often needed to ensure that patrons would be able to find needed materials. My mentor showed me how to determine what the official names of battles

were, what the current approved geographic names were for places mentioned solely by their equivalents in other centuries (particularly the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), and how to check dictionaries for synonyms that might constitute approved LCSH. If none of these resources pointed to an approved LCSH, DuVernay taught me how to construct a needed heading (TMM is a NACO library). While this project was too vast to complete in a single internship, I did contribute to improved access for a number of records, while gaining valuable hands-on cataloging experience.

The second internship involved processing a collection of sound recordings for the archives. The Mariners' Museum Audio Recordings Collection includes both collected works of maritime interest, such as sea shanties and maritime songs by a variety of performers, and recordings created by the museum, including captured maritime sounds such as steamboat whistles, a radio show featuring museum personnel from TMM's earliest days, and an oral history project sponsored by the library. With material dating back to 1931, there were many rare items in an extremely poor state of preservation. There were no catalog records other than the brief descriptions attached to the accession records; the handwritten card catalog for

the archives mentioned "Sound recordings" or "The Mariners' Museum Recordings" with no further description or points of access. Assistant to the Archivist Gregg Cina and Archives Technician Marc Nucup provided guidance in the proper processing of the collection—everything from local format for labeling folders and boxes to the organization of

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With material dating back to 1931, there were many rare items in an extremely poor state of preservation.

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the collection and the creation of the finding aid. I began with book-knowledge concerning the basic philosophy of housing and organizing archival materials, and gained practical experience in both, as well as an understanding of how to create vital access points. I was able to process most of the phonograph records, leaving the tapes and further recommendations for a future worker. I assigned numbers to phonograph records, making descriptive notes about each item as I did so, and writing appropriate information

on the sleeves. I did what I could to improve the condition of the materials, including full rehousing in acid-free containers with proper support and any appropriate cleaning. My finding aid, detailed to the item level, now provides access to a collection that the public—and many staff—didn't know existed. Before I left the project, I compiled detailed notes about the care and handling of the collection, the condition of the items, and future preservation and processing needs.

Whether you are a student, a current library employee, or both, creating your own internships can provide a big bonus both for your professional life and the ongoing life of the libraries you love. If you work at a library with special projects that could benefit from the services of an intern, I highly recommend preparing an overview and submitting it to distance education library science programs—or even local schools whose fields of study might be relevant (such as history, in the case of a museum library). This is one creative solution that not only helps overcome the problems of a small budget and staff, but also gives added value to the library itself—benefitting your patrons while at the same time providing highlights that might enhance future requests for funding. **VL**

Treasures Found by Seafaring Librarians

by Mary Johnston

Ahoy! To manage an under-graduate library while sailing around the world, you will need your well-honed library skills and a bit of an adventurous spirit. In this article, the University of Virginia librarians who have belayed their traditional landlubbing librarian jobs and successfully navigated a semester at sea present their ideas on the value of embarking upon such an adventure.

Studying on a ship while sailing the globe—that's Semester at Sea.

Answering reference questions while standing on steady sea legs—that's a Semester at Sea librarian.

Semester at Sea's floating campus, the MV Explorer.

What Is Semester at Sea?

Semester at Sea (SAS) is an educational voyage of discovery administered by the Institute for Shipboard Education (ISE) and academically sponsored by the University of Virginia (U.Va.). Differing from traditional study abroad immersion programs, SAS emphasizes a global comparative education "to build the insight and background necessary for perceiving and understanding international issues and differences."[1]

In his welcome to visitors to the SAS webpage, ISE President Dr. Les McCabe elaborates, "It is within this shipboard community that individuals not only receive the highest quality of international education available through a cur-riculum sponsored by the University of Virginia, they also receive an education in adaptability and versatility within a setting that includes individuals who share the desire to see the world and to understand its complex issues."[2]

The SAS library supports a study-abroad program that circum-navigates the globe on one of the world's fastest passenger ships. This floating campus, the MV *Explorer*, serves as dormitory, student union, athletic facility, classroom, and library for 600–700 undergraduate students representing more than 200 universities from across the United States. These students are guided by 65 faculty and staff on a 110-day voyage around the world each fall and spring semester. The summer voyage is slightly shorter at 70 days and focuses on a region such as Europe or Central and South America. To earn U.Va.

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credit, students attend classes held while the ship is at sea and participate in field programs during days spent in port.

U.Va.'s academic sponsorship of the SAS program started in 2006 and comes at a time when, according to the report of the Commission on the Future of the University, U.Va. is moving forward in its effort to raise its international profile and "will be looking at ways to mainstream a global perspective into the classroom and the broader student experience."[3] Further, Thomas Jefferson's academical village provides the model for shipboard life: "Daily life aboard the [MV] *Explorer* has been compared to a residential college experience, a place where students and faculty live and learn together—in the same way that Jefferson envisioned the Academical Village."[4]

SAS Library Challenges and Treasures

Far from the comforts of home and all the amenities available there, e.g. interlibrary loan services, knowledge from subject experts, support from colleagues, and rock-solid, high-speed Internet access, challenges ensue. Shiver me timbers! Why in the world would you, a sane librarian, choose to spend a semester at sea when plenty of challenges await right there in your home library?

A semester at sea can be a transformative experience not only for the undergraduates but also for the librarians. Here are some reasons why a semester at sea can be the library job of a lifetime:

See the world (and the world's libraries). Classes are held and the library is open for business while the ship is at sea—roughly half the voyage. While the ship is docked in each port, the library is closed, giving the entire shipboard community the opportunity to explore. Using the ship as home

base and security blanket, each SAS participant can experience vastly different cultures. And some of the world's great libraries—the Great Library of Alexandria, the Hong Kong Central Library, the Royal Library in Copenhagen (The Black Diamond), the Museum Plantin-Moretus Library in Antwerp, or the ruins of Hadrian's Library in Athens—are often only footsteps away from the dock.

Mentor a student or two. Many faculty and staff choose to adopt one or two, or even eight, students for the duration of the voyage.

Shiver me timbers! Why in the world would you, a sane librarian, choose to spend a semester at sea…?

Because so many students express an interest in being adopted in order to simulate a little bit of home life, some faculty members adopt larger-than-usual shipboard families. The opportunity to share the voyage with students in a personal way adds much to the experience. It is an opportunity to connect, to have fun, and to mentor. And when your library work-study assistants return to their home campus, complete their undergraduate degrees, and then enter graduate school for library degrees, your heart will swell with pride.

Connect with the shipboard community. Your motivation for spending a semester at sea is undoubtedly shared by other faculty and staff, creating a strong bond from the beginning that often lasts long after the voyage ends. In addition to regular library responsibilities, librarians are expected to be an integral part of

the shipboard community participating in onboard educational and social activities and attending the interdisciplinary Global Studies course.

Witness learning. The opportunity to witness learning in a more intimate scale gives the librarian an easily observable reward. Right in front of your eyes, the students gain knowledge in their course topics and an understanding of the role of the library.

Learn how to be flexible. Blimey! Things can happen quickly on the MV *Explorer*. Itineraries can change quickly based on weather and world events.

And it's not only the outside world that dictates flexibility. Living in close proximity with a shipboard population of about 1,000 students, faculty, staff, lifelong learners, and crew can require a great deal of flexibility. Adapting to close living quarters, dining with colleagues and students at every meal, and the inability to go for a solitary walk can challenge the introvert among us.

Revitalize your land-based library position. Aptly expressed by Michael Pearson, an SAS faculty alum: "The word *travel* has its roots set complexly in the ancient meaning of the word *travail*. It is associated with pain and anguish and hard work—even with the labor of childbirth. And this makes sense to me, for travel should be about bringing new things to life, and that's never easy."[5]

Yet despite the travails, each returning U.Va. librarian has asked the question, "When can I go again?" And students, too, are eager to return: "There are such strong connections established that a good number of students take more than one journey and some return to work either full-time on staff or to become lifelong volunteers."[6]

The SAS experience is great for shaking things up and bringing new things to life. In addition to being

far away from home, the librarian faces the challenges and benefits of a new living arrangement, a new highly specialized collection, a new support mechanism, a new library catalog, and new faculty colleagues. And it might be that once shaken, you'll want to keep things stirred when you return home again, as revealed by a former SAS librarian: "You've changed—you've seen the world, literally, but everything else has basically stayed the same.… Some librarians return to their jobs newly reinvigorated, while others, in time, move on to different careers. SAS makes people unafraid to pick up and do something different."[7]

Getting It Done

Despite the unique circumstances of running a shipboard library while sailing the world, much regular library work remains—circulation, reference, reserves, cataloging, shelf-reading, scheduling, and staffing the library from 0800 to 2300 each day at sea. To manage that workload, the library is staffed with a librarian (always from U.Va.), an assistant librarian (selected from a national pool of candidates), and library work-study students.

The shipboard library collection is "specifically tailored to international study, travel, world cultures, religion, art, history, and to the curriculum and itinerary of each voyage."[8] Expertly assembled and managed through the years, it has grown according to the teaching needs of hundreds of previous faculty.

Since 2006, SAS librarians have overseen the SAS library transition to U.Va. In addition to the semester-specific responsibilities of each

Above, view of the library from the computer lab.

Left, view of the library from the stairs.

voyage, the librarians have also accomplished the transitional tasks required to integrate the SAS library with the U.Va. library system:

- Relabeled the collection to meet U.Va. library standards
- Inventoried a library collection open to all, 24-7
- Migrated the records to a new integrated library system
- Imported all catalog records from the ship into the U.Va. library home catalog

The first U.Va. librarian to provide library services at sea was Barbie Selby, then manager of Reference and Information Services in Alderman Library. Prior to sailing, Selby laid the groundwork for future voyages by setting up systems to deliver access to U.Va. library electronic resources at sea. According to Selby, "Semester at Sea was an amazing opportunity. I was the first U.Va. SAS librarian basically because I could pick up and go more easily than my colleagues. Everything and everyone was new to me—and a bit overwhelming at first. This seems to be the experience of all SAS faculty and staff. The ship is new and strange, the people are unknown, the experience is new, the future is unknown. You start off in awe. But I also realized that 'This is a library,

Waterfront at the Royal Library in Copenhagen (The Black Diamond)

and I'm a librarian—I *can* do this!' Then, you just buckle down and do the job, and, oh yeah, travel around Asia in my case. A truly amazing opportunity."

For a more in-depth look at the SAS librarian experience, Selby and her colleagues have each blogged their adventures:

- Barbie Selby, Summer 2006, http://librarianatsea.blogspot.com/
- Erika Day, Fall 2006, http://librarianadventurepants.blogspot.com/
- Mary Johnston, Fall 2006, http://johnston9494.blogspot.com
- Erin Stalberg, Spring 2007, http://www.sea-ville.blogspot.com/
- Jean Cooper, Summer 2007, http://www.summer-at-sea.blogspot.com/
- Kathryn Soule, Fall 2007, http://soulesearching.blogspot.com/
- Melinda Baumann, Spring 2008, http://seaspan.wordpress.com/
- Mary Johnston, Summer 2008, http://johnston9494.blogspot.com
- Cathy Palombi, Fall 2008, http://seecathyatsea.blogspot.com/

Your Opportunity

To find the treasure of an SAS experience, www.semesteratsea.org marks the spot. If the benefits of a semester at sea pique your interest and you have a bit of that adventurous spirit, you might consider a semester at sea.

Assistant librarian duties include reference work, faculty assistance, supervision of work-study students, maintaining a fifteen-hour-per-day library operation, collection review, cataloging (LC), reserve processing, and shelf-reading. Requirements are MLS or equivalent, five years of experience as an academic librarian, and supervisory experience. The application process for assistant librarian begins on the SAS webpage at http://www.semesteratsea.org/faculty-and-staff/employment-opportunities/about-staff-positions.php.

Sailing as an SAS librarian is a challenging and rewarding library experience, perhaps the assignment of a lifetime, for those committed to the concept of academic enrichment through travel and education.

Notes

1. Institute for Shipboard Education, *Voyager's Handbook* (Charlottesville, VA: Institute for Shipboard Education, 2008), 13, https://www.ise.virginia.edu/asp/mydocuments/VoyagersHandbook.pdf (accessed April 16, 2009).

2. Les McCabe, "Semester at Sea President's Welcome," *Semester at Sea*, http://www.semesteratsea.org/about-us/overview/presidents-welcome.php (accessed November 25, 2008).

3. Carol Wood, "Board of Visitors Funds Initiatives That Will Set U.Va.'s Direction for Next Decade and Raise Its International Profile," *U.Va. Today: Top News from the University of Virginia*, October 4, 2008, http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=6619 (accessed November 25, 2008).

4. Carol Wood, "Charting a New Course for Semester at Sea: Asia/Pacific Voyage Marks U.Va.'s Debut as Academic Sponsor," *Inside U.Va. Online* 36, no. 12 (June 30, 2006), http://www.virginia.edu/insideuva/course_sas.html (accessed November 25, 2008).

5. Michael Pearson, *Innocents Abroad Too: Journeys Around the World on Semester at Sea* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 2008).

6. Wood, "Charting a New Course."

7. Danianne Mizzy, "Job of a Lifetime: Around the World in 100 Days," *College & Research Libraries News* 63, no. 10 (November 2002), http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/publications/crlnews/2002/nov/aroundworld100.cfm (accessed November 25, 2008).

8. Institute for Shipboard Education, "Quick Facts," *Semester at Sea*, http://www.semesteratsea.org/about-us/history-and-timeline/quick-facts.php (accessed November 25, 2008). **VL**

The Partnership between Public Libraries and Public Education

by Edwin S. Clay III

Note: This article is adapted from an October 18, 2008, presentation to the Potomac Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa, an international honorary society for women educators.

The issue of transformation, I believe, is the common ground between public libraries and public education. However, it is important to clarify what the word means. While my day job is head of the Fairfax County Public Library, I am also an adjunct professor at Catholic University's School of Library and Information Science. As such, I am genetically programmed to be sure my students and I understand the word in question before we are able to initiate a productive discussion.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides this definition of "transform," a verb from Old French: "to change or alter in form, appearance or nature; to metamorphose; to change in nature, disposition, heart, or the like; to convert." I suspect this is not a new idea or concept for you, but I also suspect that a lot of folks don't think of the educational system as a system designed to change (or transform) the individual—in hundreds of ways. But this concept, often in other guises, is at the heart of the development of public education and libraries.

Parallel Histories—Public Education and Public Libraries

Let's begin with a brief examination of the history of public education and public libraries to expose the similar roots these two institutions share. The first known public education system was established in ancient Israel around 63–64 CE. The high priest insisted that a uni-

> **… this concept, often in other guises, is at the heart of the development of public education and libraries.**

fied system of teaching—a consolidation of all the existing independent schools—was required.

Jump forward many centuries. In the American colonies, the first public school was authorized on January 2, 1643, by the town of Dedham in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Moreover, since institutions of learning need to be accredited, the Regents of the University of the State of New York, established on May 1, 1784, became the first educational accrediting agency in the U.S.

Education became an important focus for leaders after the American Revolution. In fact, Virginia's own Thomas Jefferson is credited as the first American leader to suggest creating a public school system. He believed education should be under the control of the government, free from religious biases, and available to all people regardless of their status in society.

It took a while, however, to translate Jefferson's concept into practice due to political and economic upheavals, as well as the vast waves of immigration encountered in the nineteenth century. After Jefferson, the public education movement owes much to Horace Mann. When he served as secretary of education for Massachusetts beginning in 1837, he became an advocate for setting up common schools. The Massachusetts model eventually spread throughout the nation. By 1870, all states offered free elementary schooling.

To compress the content of many doctoral dissertations, the establishment of a free, national system of public education in the U.S. developed for one major purpose—to endow children with the necessary skills, analytical abilities, and technical competencies required to *transform* them into productive members of society. In

Edward S. Clay III *has been director of the Fairfax County Public Library since 1982.*

Patricia C. Bangs, *a communications specialist with the Fairfax County Public Library, assisted in adapting this article. She has been a staff writer with the library since 1998.*

other words, the rationale—the *raison d'être*—of the public school system is to provide the environment and the grounding to support and encourage a child in the discovery of self.

Paralleling the history and development of public education is the creation of the public library. As we in the information profession know, the collection of written knowledge in some sort of repository has existed since the dawn of civilization. Among the earliest repositories were the 30,000 clay tablets found in ancient Mesopotamia dating back more than 5,000 years. Collections such as these—and the places where they resided—eventually became known as libraries.

In the U.S., public education and public libraries have a common benefactor—Thomas Jefferson. There's that name, again. After the British burned the Library of Congress's initial collection during the War of 1812, the institution bought Jefferson's personal library in 1815 to rebuild the lost collection. While Jefferson's sale was for personal reasons—he needed the money because he was on the verge of bankruptcy—his love of books and his early advocacy for libraries open to the public are well-known. All public librarians worth their salt are able to quote Jefferson, who wrote to John Adams in 1815, "I cannot live without books."

It was the concept of free public education championed by Jefferson, Mann, and others, as well as the literacy needs of waves of nineteenth-century immigrants, that fostered the spread of public libraries in the U.S. The first public library opened in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833. Fifty years later, philanthropist Andrew Carnegie would begin his project to put public libraries in every community. By 1919, there were 1,700 "Carnegie" libraries scattered across the nation.

Why did the town of Peterborough believe public tax dollars should be spent on a library? Why did Carnegie value the spread of public libraries throughout the country? Again, I believe the answer is found in the concept of transformation. The city fathers of Peterborough and Carnegie valued the change that libraries fostered in their users. They viewed the library as an essential part of a city's total educational network. They saw how reading transformed an individual—how this transformation brought ever-increasing benefits to the community.

They saw how reading transformed an individual—how this transformation brought ever-increasing benefits to the community.

Certainly these common roots between public education and public libraries are evident in the history of the Fairfax County Public Library, which I direct. With a $200 grant from the Board of Supervisors and several boxes of books from the Library of Virginia, FCPL came into existence. From the beginning the library was connected to the public school system. The initial library board consisted of three individuals—the county executive, the superintendent of schools, and a third person they jointly selected.

Today there are twelve members on the Fairfax County Library's Board of Trustees. While eleven are nominated by county supervisors and the City of Fairfax, one is nominated by the school board and appointed by the county. The

current board member representing the schools is the coordinator of Fairfax County Public Schools media services.

Obviously, public schools and the public library are separate and distinct entities, but they share a common heritage, mandate, and concept of "public good."

Partners in Transformation

Earlier I indicated that public schools and public libraries were partners in education as they developed in the nineteenth century. I hope they still are today and certainly think they should be. But what does such a partnership mean? Again, here is a definition. A partnership is "the state or condition of being a partner; participation; joint interest." I might add that in a partnership the participants are equals. Each brings to the table an equal array of assets and resources.

One source of collaboration is a partnership between public and school libraries. In recent years there has been renewed interest in the importance of this partnership. The 1991 White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services emphasized the need for cooperative ventures. For example, current research demonstrates the strong connection between early literacy investments and the improved outcomes for young children. Researchers are showing that children who begin kindergarten with greater literacy skills are more likely to test well in reading and basic mathematics.

Public libraries are about education, but are not exclusively educational institutions. Here is how the Fairfax County Public Library states its vision: "The Fairfax County Public Library is the dynamic link connecting customers to local and global resources for lifelong learning and self-enrichment." We define our mission as follows: "The

mission of the Fairfax County Public Library is to enrich individual and community life by providing and encouraging the use of library resources and services to meet the evolving educational, recreational, and informational needs of the residents of Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax." I am sure many public library systems in Virginia have similar vision and/or mission statements.

Public Libraries: Educational Support Centers

We, and other library systems, are about lifelong learning, as well as responding to the evolving educational needs of our customers. Such a broad educational role for the public library has always existed—even at the beginning of the public library movement. On a regular basis the American Library Association has issued position papers calling for an ever-expanding educational role for public libraries, based on the changing needs and trends in education and in the community.

Some of the basic public library approaches to partnering with school systems include:

• Collaborating with agencies serving hard-to-reach youth, such as child-care agencies, by providing books and other materials and offering training for staff and volunteers. For example, my library system has a full-time early literacy outreach specialist on staff. She visits preschools, Head Start centers, classes for pregnant teens, and other community outlets to train teachers and parents in the principles of early literacy. At the same time, she explains the various resources the library offers to help children get ready to read.
• Providing opportunities for youth to practice reading and improve communication skills through summer reading programs, storytimes, book discussion groups for younger readers, and contests.
• Creating intergenerational experiences using library resources that help youth and older adults better understand and value each other. The Fairfax library's extensive volunteer program brings volunteers of all ages together in such projects as Adopt-a-Shelf or landscaping.
• Providing safe, welcoming places for children and young adults outside of school hours. These are places they can gather with peers to enjoy library resources

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… we have specifically marketed to young adults by offering gaming nights in branches; creating a presence on MySpace, Flickr, and YouTube….

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or be alone to pursue personal interests. Here in Fairfax, we have specifically marketed to young adults by offering gaming nights in branches; creating a presence on MySpace, Flickr, and YouTube; and creating podcasts and offering a virtual reference service that will respond to questions that are submitted as text messages. Our virtual reference service has seen an extensive growth in usage by both young boys and girls.
• Offering 24-7 service anywhere with library websites. Students don't need to come physically to a library to use its resources outside of school hours. There are educational databases for students at all grade levels, which provide biographies, science, and geography and science resources, as well as access to newspaper and magazine articles, current affairs, literary criticism, and more. FCPL offers access to Tutor. com, which lets students interact with actual subject-matter experts online—again, outside of school hours.

Basically, public libraries are educational support centers and offer an incredible array of materials and services that support and supplement school libraries. But there are also opportunities for teachers and library professionals to partner and share their specific expertise. For example, here in Fairfax, one of our regional libraries partnered with a nearby middle school last summer to help summer school students finish reading and math assignments. At five specific "Poe Nights," named for Poe Middle School, students and their families came to the library, applied for library cards, and found appropriate books and resources to help with their assignments. They also met with teachers from the middle school who volunteered to be at the library branch on those five nights. Library staff were happy to help guide the students around the library, suggest titles, and introduce students to all aspects of the library's resources. It was an exceptionally successful endeavor.

As many of us are aware, partnerships are not always easy. A partnership between the public school and the public library is most successful when certain local conditions are in place:
1. A shared vision and common goals;
2. A process of formal planning and adoption of policies and procedures;
3. Ongoing evaluation processes as part of the planning process;
4. Commitment on the part of educators and librarians;
5. Channels of communication to facilitate ongoing interaction;

6. Adequate funding; and

7. Adequate staff.

The current budget crunch for most public schools and libraries will most definitely affect partnering. But there are behind-the-scenes actions that can help even during this economic downturn. Schools and libraries can partner in the joint purchase of online databases. A homework alert process between school and library staff can be established and schools can offer their students access to public library catalogs.

I have written primarily about partnerships between K-12 public schools and public libraries, but there are certainly opportunities for partnerships to develop between public colleges and libraries as well. In Fairfax, many students in nearby colleges, universities, and vocational schools use our resources, and we partner with institutions of higher learning. For example, we offer a proctoring service for online course exams.

I began this article talking about transformation. The question both public libraries and public schools need to keep asking is, "Who will we change today?" The collective history of the two institutions is based on it—as is our future.

Indeed, there is strength in numbers and strength in partnerships. We in the library profession are honored to be at the same table with our public school colleagues. **VL**

Guidelines for Submissions to *Virginia Libraries*

1. *Virginia Libraries* seeks to publish articles and reviews of interest to the library community in Virginia. Articles reporting research, library programs and events, and opinion pieces are all considered for publication. Queries are encouraged. Brief announcements and press releases should be directed to the *VLA Newsletter*.

2. Please submit manuscripts via email as attachments in Microsoft Word, rich text, or plain text format. Articles should be double-spaced with any bibliographic notes occurring at the end of the article. Please avoid using the automatic note creation function provided by some word processing programs.

3. Articles in *Virginia Libraries* conform to the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* and *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. Accepted articles are subject to editing for style and clarity. Authors will be consulted on points of fact.

4. All articles submitted for consideration are reviewed by the editors and may be refereed by the editorial board. Articles that are not selected for publication will be returned within three months.

5. VLA holds the copyright on all articles published in *Virginia Libraries*. Contributors of articles receive two copies of the issue in which their work appears.

6. Illustrations are encouraged and should be submitted whenever appropriate to accompany a manuscript. Hard copy illustrations will be returned if requested in advance. Digital images should have a resolution of at least 300 dpi. Authors are responsible for securing legal permission to publish photographs and other illustrations.

7. Each contributor should provide a brief sketch of professional accomplishments of no more than fifty words that includes current title, affiliation, and email address. Unless specified otherwise, this information will be shared with readers of *Virginia Libraries*. Physical addresses should also be provided for the mailing of contributor's copies.

8. Articles should generally fall within the range of 750-3,000 words. Please query the editors before submitting any work of greater length.

9. Email manuscripts and queries to Cy Dillon, cdillon @ferrum.edu, and Lyn C. A. Gardner, cgardner@ hampton.gov. Please be sure to copy both editors.

10. *Virginia Libraries* is published quarterly. The deadlines for submission are: November 1 for Number 1, January/February/March; February 1 for Number 2, April/May/June; May 1 for Number 3, July/August/September; and August 1 for Number 4, October/November/December.

Breast Cancer Awareness Is More Than a Pink Ribbon

by Joy Galloni

*I*n 2000, the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation (VBCF) began giving public libraries donations to purchase updated breast cancer information. VBCF "is a grassroots organization committed to the eradication of breast cancer through education and advocacy."[1] Five women met at a breast cancer support group in 1991 and wanted to do more.[2] Their ages ranged from early thirties to mid-fifties. When I joined the organization seven years later, two of these women had died from breast cancer. "VBCF is the only grassroots organization in Virginia devoted solely to representing the needs of women and family members affected by breast cancer. [...] [I]ndividuals diagnosed with breast cancer, family members, friends, healthcare professionals, and others"[3] make up the four thousand-plus current members.[4] The goals of VBCF "are to establish the eradication of breast cancer as a state and national priority, to advocate for the collective needs of people affected by breast cancer, and to educate all Virginians on the truth about breast cancer. Educate. Advocate. Eradicate."[5]

Donating funds to public libraries is one of the ways to educate all Virginians.

I joined this organization after being diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998. As soon as the phone call from my doctor was complete, I began researching every word he had told me. As I moved through the frightening adventure of breast

Etta Boyd (left), a member of the VBCF Board of Directors and vice president of its Central Virginia Chapter, and Joy Galloni (right) promote breast cancer awareness and education through library resources.

cancer, reading and learning gave me a sense of calm. Having been a devoted library patron since childhood, and having moved into the career of college librarian at Richard Bland College before diagnosis, I knew libraries need current materials.

A chapter of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation was formed in the Chester Tri-Cities area. I served as the first president. All of the chapter members wanted to assist others in learning about breast cancer. Some of our events were pri-

marily for fundraising. When we had money, we wanted to return it to our respective communities.

Joy Galloni has worn the shoes of catalog, acquisitions, technical services, interlibrary loan, and public services librarian. Currently librarian at the Richard Bland College of the College of William and Mary, she has also served as director at the Jamestown Public Library, North Carolina, and is currently a breast cancer advocate and an active volunteer for the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation.

What better investment than public libraries!

As our Book Project began, the chapter members read books and reviews and created a list of books and magazines that had provided help for us. Next, members contacted Appomattox Regional Library System, Chesterfield County Library System, Petersburg Public Library, and the Colonial Heights Public Library with our idea. The VBCF Book Project was very well received.

A suggested list of book titles with ISBNs was delivered to each library with gift plates and a check. We knew each library could choose what was needed for its collection and receive better pricing from vendors. Donations were given according to the size of each library system.

The project grew as the Richmond and Chester Tri-Cities Chapters merged. The Book Project titles expanded into poetry, Spanish language materials, books for children and husbands of breast cancer patients, and alternative medicine. Henrico and Powhatan County Library Systems, Pamunkey Regional Library System, and Richmond City received donations, and last year we also added the Hawthorne Group Resource Center and the Massey Cancer Center Patient Resource Libraries Linen-Powell Library to our recipient list.

In 2007 the VBCF state board adopted the Book Project and began to present donations, suggested materials lists, and our pink and burgundy gift plates to libraries across the commonwealth. Recently, DVDs were added to the suggested materials. Proudly I say that we now donate to libraries in

The VBCF Book Project display at Appomattox Regional Library.

many areas: Meherrin Regional Library System, Portsmouth Public Library, Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Eastern Shore Public Library System, Virginia Beach Public Library System, and the Lonesome Pine Regional Library System.

Has VBCF eradicated breast cancer? No. But as a group, VBCF

members are diligently making life better until this deadly disease is eradicated. VBCF works in partnership with the National Breast Cancer Coalition to advocate for breast cancer research funding on the national level and funding for medical coverage problems. We lobby the General Assembly regularly to keep medical coverage problems at a minimum and to keep state funding for the Every Woman's Life Project.

Has VBCF met our goals of education? As volunteers speak to groups in many areas, we often hear, "I saw a VBCF bookplate in a book I checked out from my local library." The VBCF members know that breast cancer is more than a pink ribbon, and our donations to public libraries across the Commonwealth are an example of our deep commitment and caring.

Learn more about the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation and join our efforts to Educate. Advocate. Eradicate. Visit www.vbcf.org.

Notes

1. Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, "Welcome!," *VBCF: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation*, http://www.vbcf.org (accessed May 1, 2009).

2. Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, "About VBCF," *VBCF: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation*, http://www.vbcf.org (accessed May 1, 2009).

3. VBCF, "Welcome!"

4. VBCF, "About VBCF."

5. VBCF, "Welcome!" **VL**

Virginia's Emerging Leaders

by Elizabeth Hensley, Mary Hanlin, Renée DiPilato, and Sally Ma

Three librarians recount their experiences participating in the American Library Association's Emerging Leaders Initiative 2008.

Mary Hanlin

Mary Hanlin (tchanlm@tcc.edu) is the media collection development librarian at Tidewater Community College. She received her MLIS from the University of Pittsburgh.

Not long after I was accepted into the ALA Emerging Leaders (EL) program, my employer, Tidewater Community College (TCC), arranged for our institutional photographer to drop by so that my candidacy could be announced in the news section of our college website. I'd just come from the gym, and my face was still beet-red, my hair a damp swathe of tangles. "Okay, I'm ready!" I announced. The photographer blanched. I paused at his reaction. "Should I brush my hair?" The photographer … meekly nodded. When I think of my Emerging Leader experience, I often begin with that memory, not just because it is pretty funny, but also because it captures a similar tone to that of the Emerging Leaders: the ingenuousness and quiet ebullience of an initiative so new that the program wasn't entirely aware of how it was seen and what it meant, or didn't mean, to those who were selected. The experience was, nonetheless, one which I hope every librarian could have. It was a lesson that I will keep.

The process for becoming an Emerging Leader candidate typically begins in May, with applications due in July. Applications are required for all candidates, and in some ways, the application process is tougher than getting into college or library school. Candidates are required to submit their resumes, thoughtfully respond to several essay questions, and submit two letters of recommendation. Can-

> **Frankly, I was nervous: I mean, MIT, Harvard, U Nebraska, Haverford, and then … little me from TCC?**

didates also have to be new to the profession and are generally under the age of thirty-five. Every candidate has to be an ALA member. All applicants agree to attend both ALA midwinter and annual conferences. This is a bigger concession than it appears: scholarship funding for the accepted EL candidates is sparse, and though many institutions, as TCC did for me, were willing to pay for traveling fees, I met many other Emerging Leader candidates who had to fly to Philadelphia and Anaheim on their own tab.

In October, I learned I was accepted into Emerging Leaders. A manic, occasionally annoying, though extremely needed listserv of EL candidates was organized. The listserv communicated everything from finding roommates for ALA midwinter and annual to dis-

covering, serendipitously, that the academic librarian in Arkansas had once worked in the same library as the school librarian in Rhode Island. Other communication took place through the Emerging Leaders wiki, where bios and pictures were readily available. Soon after being selected for the program, I was assigned to a smaller collaborative group. As a group, we would work with the Committee of Archives, Libraries, and Museums (CALM) to update their website and to specifically add more content to the CALM wiki. The group consisted of four other librarians: David Conner from Haverford College, Marcia Dority from University of Nebraska, Michelle Baildon from MIT, and Heather Cole from Harvard. Frankly, I was nervous: I mean, MIT, Harvard, U Nebraska, Haverford, and then … little me from TCC?

When I first met my EL cohort at ALA midwinter, I almost expected them to be wearing sweaters with felt elbow pads, corduroy pants, and the wearied, contemplative faces of the truly erudite. There had to be something—anything—to say to me in an indirect manner, "I am a *librarian*, and you—not so much." It wasn't there, and I quickly realized that what made us colleagues wasn't where we worked, but rather what we did. In between collaborating, we traded database searching tips and discussed the fastest way to get to the Liberty Bell.

Elizabeth Hensley (ehensley@cclva.org) is adult services coordinator at Culpeper County Library.

The other large component to the EL program consisted of the leadership development seminars. Conducted by Connie Paul, executive director of the Central Jersey Regional Library Cooperative, and Maureen Sullivan of Maureen Sullivan Associates, the seminars consisted of various role-playing games and specific questions intended to help us determine our leadership strengths and weaknesses. We also had the opportunity to participate in Q&A sessions from current, past, and future ALA presidents Leslie Burger, Jim Rettig, and Loriene Roy.

At the end of the daylong seminar, we were introduced to our project mentors, who typically chaired the ALA committees with whom each EL group had been assigned to work. Christian Dupont, formerly from UVA, served as our EL group mentor. Without his expertise, his constant feedback, and his sincere optimism, I suspect the work that we needed to do as a group throughout the six months between ALA midwinter and annual wouldn't have been done. Much of the tone from the daylong seminar and its various speakers was that of encouragement. ALA, according to all, genuinely wanted us to be involved, active members, perhaps even on some ALA committees—decision-makers. Consequently, I didn't just go to midwinter and attend the EL seminar. Rather, I went to midwinter and attended various roundtables and committees, particularly the Video Roundtable and the community college section of ACRL. All of the groups were extremely welcoming, and I genuinely didn't feel as though it was awry for me to attend something in which others had been involved for years. I left midwinter with a sense of optimism: I would not only successfully foster relationships through Emerging Leaders, but also truly become an active member of ALA.

Between midwinter and the conference, there was an unintended lapse in communication between my EL group and me. Nonetheless, the experience between us remained positive. We quickly delineated responsibilities, and all of us genuinely committed serious time to getting the project done, and done well.

Before I knew it, I was packing for the annual conference in Anaheim, where Maureen Sullivan conducted more leadership workshops. Once again, part of the daylong seminar was used to

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… Emerging Leaders has given me enough to believe, to know, that all of us, even on our worst-hair days, belong.

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describe the various opportunities and structure of ALA. Leslie Burger, ALA past president, opened the discussion up to Q&A. I think we were all a bit surprised by some of the Emerging Leaders' commentary. At one point, one of the EL candidates complained about the membership fees, and Leslie Burger pointed out that compared to other organizations, ALA's fees were not huge. From there, however, it seemed as though a stronger, unspoken resentment toward ALA was being articulated. One person complained about lack of clarity regarding ALA structure. Another challenged Burger's assertion that ALA fees were indeed cost-effective. This continued for several minutes, until, tongue-in-cheek, Burger announced that she only had five minutes left to solve all the problems of ALA. We all laughed, and the tension lightened a bit.

But that moment, though small, is one of my more distinct memories of my Emerging Leader experience. What I think that moment captured and what I have since learned is that it takes much more than a daylong seminar or a few free lunches to build a sense of belonging and commitment to one's professional organization. My Emerging Leader experience did provide some good tips about better personal leadership, but for me it was even more successful in making me understand that ALA, as an organization, had spaces for me to become not simply a member but also a participant. I wonder, however, if there were other Emerging Leader candidates who just attended the EL seminar and nothing else. I wonder whether they were the ones who still found no purpose in their membership fees other than to get into the Emerging Leaders program—and whether being an Emerging Leader was merely a point on their resume.

I have many colleagues who don't belong to ALA, just as there are many of us who don't belong to VLA, and I realized that the decision not to belong begins first with the sense that no one wants us to belong. I used to think if someone, or something, didn't reach out to me, they didn't want me, but I've learned that it's not that simple. Is ALA perfect? Of course not, but the reason it effects change so potently is exactly why we must reach out to it to really belong. ALA is huge, and though it may not know that we exist, I've learned it honestly does welcome us when we present ourselves. My Emerging Leader experience showed me that no professional organization is going to shut a door in my face unless I do it to myself first. "There are no closed ALA meetings," Leslie Burger responded at one point. And I remember a moment of stunned silence: no closed meetings at all? You can walk into any meeting?

Why hadn't anyone told us this? Though I don't know the answer to that, I do know my experience with EL has given me more confidence to walk through the door. It has given me more assuredness that even though I don't work at Harvard, no one is giggling behind my back. I am not one who will ever envision myself as a leader, but Emerging Leaders has given me enough to believe, to know, that all of us, even on our worst-hair days, belong.

Renée DiPilato

Renée DiPilato (rdipilato@alexandria. lib.va.us) is the branch manager of the Duncan Branch of the Alexandria Public Library. She earned her MLS from the Catholic University of America.

I cannot say enough positive things about my experience with ALA's Emerging Leaders program. The leadership training components given by Maureen Sullivan at midwinter and annual were top-notch. These training sessions provided a venue to learn new skills and be introduced to our colleagues within the program. I will note that it would have been beneficial to have an additional face-to-face meeting in between the conferences—this would certainly be easier to accomplish with a statewide program. Another exciting aspect of the program was getting to know individuals in similar situations throughout the country. Connecting with other young librarians and forming friendships and relationships was a wonderful opportunity.

The crux of the program involves the working group and project to which you are assigned. Each participant does have some choice in this project through a "bidding" process. Projects varied in scope and had some connection to a division within the overall organization. I chose and happily was selected to work on the Public Library Association's transition from committees to Communities of Practice. Personally, I was quite deliberate in my selection, as I wanted to work on a project that was likely to be implemented within ALA. Feedback from past participants indicated that a project's implementation was crucial to their satisfaction with the EL program. Clearly, it is a disappointment to work with team members for six or more months only to have your project shelved.

The most rewarding aspect of

If VLA were to form a leadership program, I would advise creating projects that are relevant and of actual use to VLA.

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my time with the EL program was getting to see my group's work used in an actual PLA program. Our research and report formed the foundation for the transition to Communities of Practice, so we became part of the process and were included in the implementation.

If VLA were to form a leadership program, I would advise creating projects that are relevant and of actual use to VLA. This is the best way to get people excited and involved in their professional organizations.

Sally Ma

Sally Ma (sallyma16@gmail.com) currently works as the youth services manager at the Lorton Branch of Fairfax County Public Library and part-time as a research associate with Fitzgerald Information Services in California. She received her MSLIS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in August 2007.

I first learned about the ALA Emerging Leaders Program from an email calling for applicants on the listserv for Spectrum Scholars. As per the Emerging Leaders wiki, "The program is designed to enable more than one hundred new librarians to get on the fast track to ALA and professional leadership. Participants are given the opportunity to work on a variety of projects, network with peers, and get an inside look into ALA structure and activities." The program was started as one of former ALA President Leslie Burger's six initiatives.

There is a criterion for applicants to be under thirty-five years old and/or have fewer than five years of post-MLS experience. That criterion was what attracted me most to the program. At the time I applied, I was twenty-three years old, had just received my MSLIS from Illinois, and did not have much experience in the field. I was excited to work with other new librarians who could relate to me. I am also interested in the management and administrative side of the profession and thought the workshops would help prepare me for future leadership roles.

The Emerging Leaders program consists of two all-day workshops, at the midwinter and annual conferences, and virtual work projects in between. At midwinter, we learned about the ALA organization and structure, principles and practices of effective leadership, opportunities and challenges of leading in a professional association, and project management. Then we broke up into project teams, met with our mentors for consultation on the projects, and ended the day with a reception/meet-and-greet. The program coordinators for the Emerging Leaders program did a great job at choosing a diverse group of participants.

There were twenty-six projects

to choose from. I got my second choice, which was to create recruitment videos for librarianship and the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA). My teammates included a children's librarian from California, a project coordinator from New Jersey, a business researcher from West Virginia, and a branch manager from Arizona. We communicated via email and our group wiki. Working virtually was definitely challenging at times, but I think it was a good learning experience for all of us. Instead of a traditional video, we decided to do a slideshow with pictures, text, and music (mostly due to our geographical limitations). Although the video did not turn out exactly as we had planned, we were happy with the end result nonetheless.

I enjoyed the second workshop at the annual conference immensely, more than the first one at midwinter. The highlight of the workshop was to present poster sessions of the projects we had been working on for the past five months. But for me, the best part of the day was a session called "Transforming ALA: A Dialog with Leslie Burger." It was basically a Q&A session with a former ALA president about what improvements might be made to ALA. Participants were not shy about expressing their frustrations with ALA, including the costs of joining (especially when adding on divisions and roundtables), wanting to get involved on committees

but not having the financial means to attend conferences, not receiving any responses when inquiring about wanting to join committees, and the importance of politics and networking when getting involved in ALA. There was a clear dissonance between how ALA is cur-

> **There was a clear dissonance between how ALA is currently run and how new librarians think it should be run, and it was an inspiring moment to observe our voices being heard.**

rently run and how new librarians think it should be run, and it was an inspiring moment to observe our voices being heard.

The best part of participating in the Emerging Leaders program was being around people who are passionate about the career field. From the participants I spoke with, they all seem to have a genuine interest in becoming leaders in the profession and creating change. I think young librarians face various challenges in the workplace because of their age, so it was refreshing to be

in an environment where people did not focus on my age and professional experience. It was a great networking opportunity, and I still keep in touch with my team members and other participants.

One way VLA can help support new librarians is to sponsor an Emerging Leader. The Emerging Leaders program does not provide any financial assistance to attend the midwinter or annual conference, although various library organizations (New Members Round Table, Library and Information Technology Association, Association of College & Research Libraries, and Georgia Library Association) provided sponsorships of $1,000 each to cover the costs of attending the conferences. Of the 121 people accepted into the program, 37 received sponsorships. The Emerging Leaders program is going into its third year, and I think it has a lot of potential to create positive change not only within ALA but also among future generations of new librarians.

Two members of the Virginia Library Association, Laura Horne from Richmond and Sarah Townsend from Norfolk, are among the participants in the 2009 Emerging Leaders program. Three other librarians from Virginia include Beth Larkee; Suzanna Panter, who was sponsored by AASL; and Sarah Wright. **VL**

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