

Library History Round Table Newsletter



American Library Association
Library History Round Table



Library History

Round Table Promoting library history since 1947

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**LHRT Executive Meeting at ALA in Anaheim is open to all interested members. It will be held on Sunday, June 29, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., Room TBA.**

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Message from the Chair

Greetings to all LHRT members. Although this is a fairly quiet year for LHRT, with only one award competition-the Justin Winsor-we do have some excellent programs planned for the Anaheim conference. It is through these annual programs and research forum sessions that LHRT has played an important role in stimulating research in library history and offering scholars and librarians opportunities to share their work with an appreciative audience.

ALA LHRT PROGRAM

Public Library History in the Late 20th Century: A Comparative Perspective - Sunday: 6/29/2008 - 1:30 am - 3:30

Last December I contacted leaders of several ALA units inviting them to consider co-sponsorship for our Edward Holley Lecture on public library history in 20th century France, Britain and the United States. The response was very enthusiastic!! Our program will be co-sponsored by Public Library Association and also by the PLA-International Relations Committee. The International Relations Round Table not only agreed to cosponsor this session, but sent the information to the IRRT Public Library Interest Group as well as the Sister Libraries Committee of IRRT, and both wanted to be involved with our program. The ACRL Western European Studies Section (WESS) and the Library Research Round Table (LRRT) have also agreed to be co-sponsors. It was extremely gratifying to see the interest in library history in so many other ALA units, and to find that a number of groups are concerned with comparative approaches to public library history. Abstracts of the papers are below:

From planning to pluralism: the public library in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century - by Alistair Black

ABSTRACT: The Second World War was a watershed for the development of the public library in Britain. The McCoolin Report (1942), a product of the spirit of reconstruction that swept society and politics in the war years, recognized that although the public library had become a popular and important civic institution, there

were large gaps in its provision and severe shortcomings in its organization, and that considerable planning by central government was required to remedy these. Public libraries became part of the fabric of the welfare state, benefiting, once the period of post-war austerity had ended, from a high level of public expenditure. A golden age for the public library in the 1960s and early 1970s gave way to an era of financial restraint that hampered innovations in service provision like community librarianship, which was also restricted by tensions within the library profession. Community librarianship, along with the inclusion of libraries in a digital 'people's network' and the appearance of a new wave of library buildings, amounted to a late-twentieth century effort by the public library to re-position itself in an age of pluralism and shifting patron expectation.

Cultural, Political and Social Challenges Faced by French Public Libraries from the Liberation to the End of the Century - by Anne-Marie Bertrand

French municipal libraries experienced remarkable growth and development during the last half of the 20th century. Although planning for modernization of public libraries began in the late 1940s, it was the period from 1967 through 1980 when public library development really took off. However, while the new model of public library service expanded during the following decade, French libraries also continued to confront the challenge of preserving cultural heritage materials as well as reaching a broader public. The cultural role of public libraries has remained central, but they have also attempted to democratize access to informational and educational resources, including the provision of Internet access. In analyzing these developments, role of national and local government, of library users and of the library profession will be explored.

Certain Ambiguities: The Idea of the American Public Library Since 1945 - by Douglas Raber

Because librarians have long identified the public library as both an essential and representative institution of American democracy, the public library reflects the contests and ambiguities that have defined its historical context. Since the end of the World War II, professional discourse about the public library and its purpose has demonstrated a remarkable adaptability to that context. I intend to examine discourse surrounding projects initiated by the American Library Association and later the Public Library Association in order to arrive a more complete knowledge of how librarianship has conceived the role and meaning of the public library in American culture and how that concept has changed over time. Along the way I hope gain a better understanding of American democratic culture itself. Like that culture, the American public library is still in the process of invention.

LHRT Website

We were informed this February that Letitia Earvin our ALA staff liaison would no longer be able to maintain the LHRT website. Therefore Larry Nix was asked if he would be willing to volunteer to take on this responsibility-and we are delighted that he said yes!

Larry retired from the Wisconsin state library agency in 2003 after 23 years of service. He has remained active in the Wisconsin Library Association and is currently serving as Chair of a Steering Committee that is exploring the possibility of establishing a Wisconsin Library Heritage Center as a program of the Wisconsin Library Association Foundation.

While working as a part time-library consultant during the last five years he has also continued to develop his wonderful Library History Buff website. Larry launched his site in 2002 with the title Librarians and in 2005 he gave it its present name. This popular site had a total 164,956 page views during the last 12 months. And according to Google Statistics as of March 1, 2008, for a search on the phrase "library history." Larry's site is #1 of about 372,000 (ALA LHRT comes in at #2). If you have not visited the Library History Buff <http://www.libraryhistorybuff.org/larrynix.htm> (<http://www.libraryhistorybuff.org/larrynix.htm>) I would encourage you to take a look. The stated goal of the site is "promoting the appreciation, enjoyment, and preservation of

library history." In addition to web exhibits from his own collections, Larry includes links to fascinating sites such as exhibits, photographs of library architecture, library postcard and postage stamps, links to websites of library historians, and much, much more. When he takes over the LHRT website, Larry Nix has agreed to add new content and links.

The LHRT website was originally set up by Joy Kingsolver, and was later moved to its present location on the ALA site. Its address will remain the same when Larry takes over. Thanks to Joy and to ALA staff our website has become a very useful resource that includes our newsletters from 1996 to 2006 and bibliographies compiled by Ed Goedeken that go back to 1990. Although we will have to retain the format designated by ALA the executive committee would welcome suggestions on ways to enhance our website.

Financial Issues

In the minutes of the midwinter meeting you will find a summary of our concern over the low return on our endowments. Because lack of resources from these funds leaves us with limited resources to maintain our awards and activities, Ken Potts, in consultation with the LHRT executive committee, has prepared a statement proposing a dues increase. I strongly support this proposal. LHRT has more awards than most other round tables and we definitely would benefit from an increased stream of revenue.

Mary Niles-Maack
Chair, ALA-LHRT

LHRT Research Forum, ALA Conference 2008, Sunday June 29th, 10:30 to 12:00

"History of Libraries and Librarianship in the American West."

This year LHRT's Research Forum will consider new or continuing research on the history of American libraries and librarianship in the West. The forum will be held on Sunday morning, June 29, 10:30 am -12:00 pm at a yet undisclosed location. Please check the LHRT website for the updated room location as the Conference nears.

Three library historians will present papers on varying historical aspects of libraries and library development in the West, followed by commentary and reaction by an accomplished historian in the field.

The speakers and topics will include the following:

Suzanne M. Stauffer, School of Library and Information Science, Louisiana State University: A Good Social Work: Women's Clubs, Libraries, and the Construction of a Secular Society in Utah, 1890-1920;

Brad Reel, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison: Cultural Amenities, Wholesome Alternatives: Libraries and Reading Rooms of America's Western Railroads; and

David B. Gracy II, University of Texas at Austin: To Have the People of Texas See the Need for it: Laying the Foundation for the Texas State Library, 1835-1909.

Joanne Passet, a historian at Indiana University East (Richmond) and author of *Cultural Crusaders: Women Librarians in the American West* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), will act as responder to complete the program. We hope to see you all there.

Kenneth Potts
Vice-Chair/Chair-elect, ALA-LHRT

Proposed LHRT Dues Increase

Following discussion at the LHRT Executive Committee at the ALA Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

(6/24/07), and again at Midwinter in Philadelphia (1/13/08), it appears that our current LHRT budget picture is less than desirable. The discussion centered on LHRT's two endowed funds and the fact that the Winsor Prize Endowment is not generating sufficient interest to fund the annual award. (The Justin Winsor Prize consists of a \$500 award given to the author of an outstanding essay on the subjects of library history, including the history of libraries, librarianship, and book culture.) LHRT's Preliminary Budget for FY09 indicates that during the past year expenditures surpassed income by nearly a thousand dollars, and that our two endowed funds appear to have lost money.

The consensus of the executive committee at our last meeting was that there is cause for concern for the financial outlook for LHRT. Although LHRT's current financial status and outlook appears sound, and the budget solvent, it seems advisable to consider seeking additional income. Certainly, we will want to ensure a secure budget outlook that will allow the Roundtable to fund adequately the needs of annual program expenses, two prize awards, a quinquennial library history seminar, and other one-time initiatives that may advance the roundtable's goals and further its mission. It certainly would behoove the Roundtable to initiate fundraising efforts. One way we have successfully raised funds in the past was through our book auctions. Other kinds of fundraising efforts could be considered as well.

Other than fundraising or gift donations, membership dues remain the primary source of income for LHRT. Now is probably a good time to consider a dues increase to address these financial concerns. A secondary purpose of a dues increase would be to eventually build the endowments so that they will in time serve the roundtable by generating more spending dollars. Currently, regular membership dues for LHRT is \$15, with student dues set at \$5. A quick survey of the other 16 ALA roundtables indicates LHRT is on the lower end of the dues spectrum. For six ALA roundtables, regular membership dues is \$20. The remaining 10 roundtables have dues set at \$15 or less. We hope to entertain a proposal at the Annual Conference Executive Committee meeting that would increase its LHRT's regular membership dues from \$15 to \$20. Student membership dues would remain at the same rate of \$5, as an incentive for new membership among our youngest colleagues. The ALA webpage also notes that LHRT has an "organization or corporate membership" dues set at \$12. The corporate membership dues could also be increased to at least \$20.

Kenneth Potts
Vice-Chair/Chair-elect, ALA-LHRT

LHRT Library Tour for ALA 2008

Take a step back in time -- join LHRT for a historic walking tour of the Anaheim Public Library!

ALA conferences give us a great opportunity to learn about libraries in other parts of the United States. They also provide a chance for reconnecting and having some fun! Anaheim, the host city for the upcoming annual meeting, has a long history of public library service spanning the 1870s to the present day. And you can find out all about it. Please join us on Friday, June 28th for a walk around the Anaheim Public Library. Opal Kissinger and Jane Newell will lead us on a 2-hour tour of the old Carnegie Building and the (newer) Main Library. Kissinger, author of a detailed chronology, will tell us how "it all started in a candy store." So put on your walking shoes and meet us at 3:00pm sharp at the entrance to the Carnegie Building (241 S. Anaheim Boulevard). Transportation is up to you, but information about public transit will be posted soon on the LHRT listserv. Have other questions? -- contact Bernadette A. Lear, 717-948-6360 or BAL19@psu.edu (mailto:bal19@psu.edu). In the past, LHRT has toured libraries in San Antonio and New Orleans, as well as the Science Fiction Museum in Seattle. These experiences have always been rewarding. Hope to see you again in Anaheim!

Bernadette Lear
Secretary-Treasurer, ALA-LHRT

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again in Anaheim!

Bernadette Lear
Secretary-Treasurer, ALA-LHRT

Rutgers University's Seminar in the History of the Book, February 21-22, 2008

"Right Here I See My Own Books": A Cultural History of the Women's Library at the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago 1893)

Wayne Wiegand, F. William Summers Professor of Library and Information Studies & Professor of American Studies, Florida State University;

Sarah Wadsworth, Assistant Professor, English Department, Marquette University

The Woman's Building Library Relational Database: An Interactive Demonstration

Melodie Fox, Associate Dean of Instruction, Bryant & Stratton College

Wayne Wiegand and Sarah Wadsworth's talk on the Woman's Building Library (WBL) at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, in combination with Melodie Fox's presentation of their database of the WBL's known holdings, highlighted an abundance of detail and insightful analysis of the WBL's context and collection.

Wiegand, Wadsworth and Fox also pointed to the collection's research potential for a wide range of disciplines.

The WBL's shelves boasted 7,000 books written, edited, illustrated or translated by women, donated by 41 states and 21 countries. Selection criteria were left to the discretion of each state and country, and there were inconsistencies surrounding the question of quality or quantity in collection decisions. Massachusetts, for example, opted for high standards, and even restricted representation of its best-known female authors, such as Louisa May Alcott, to only one volume, whereas New York State strove for comprehensiveness and donated 2,500 volumes, comprising a third of WBL's total collection.

Despite pressure from contemporary librarians, including Melvil Dewey who was a directing force behind the scenes, the Board of Lady Managers in charge of the WBL decided that its role as an exhibit should trump its functionality as a library. The simple fact of the 7,000 volumes -- tangible proof of women's contribution to literary culture -- is what awed Exposition visitors, not the content or quality of those volumes.

As attested to by the WBL database, the majority of the collection, in contrast to traditional library collections of the time, consisted of fiction, as well as cookbooks and domestic manuals, ephemera and life writing. Other treasures include missionary accounts, advice books for marriage (along with discussions of divorce), temperance works, Christian devotional texts, and even an "autobiography" of a slave written by a white woman. The top three genres are literature and rhetoric at over 2,000, history and geography at over 550, and religion at over 450. The bulk of materials were published in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. Analysis of the holdings of the WBL could be fruitful for many disciplines. One could, for example, compare the treatment of the Civil War in Northern vs. Southern state submissions, or explore regional responses to women's rights.

The information in the database has been extracted from the incomplete bibliographic data in the original WBL shelf list (see: <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/clarke/library/library.html> (<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/clarke/library/library.html>)) and considerably enhanced. Wiegand, Wadsworth and Fox would like to find a way to allow other scholars to contribute to the further development of the database. They would also like to find an academic institution to host it online and thus render it accessible to a wider audience.

For more on the Women's Building and its library, see the winter 2006 special issue of *Libraries & the Cultural*

Record, vol. 41, no. 1.

Rachel Miller
MLIS candidate, Rutgers University

The Library History Buff Website

If you Google the term "library history", the first site in a list of over 300,000 items returned will be the "Library History Buff" (LHB) website located at <http://www.libraryhistorybuff.org> (<http://www.libraryhistorybuff.org/>). At least that was the case when I wrote this article. I created the LHB website in 2005 as a personal platform for "promoting the appreciation, enjoyment, and preservation of library history". It was preceded by another website which I established in 2002 called "Librarians". Both websites stemmed from my interest in collecting and preserving artifacts related to libraries and librarianship.

In the last twelve months, the approximately 100 individual pages on the LHB website have been viewed over 160,000 times by over 40,000 different viewers. These are, of course, not very dramatic statistics for a commercial or organizational website. I think they are significant, however, when you consider the topic of the website and that it is a personal website developed by an amateur. The relative success of the LHB website has been assisted by being indexed by the Librarian's Index to the Internet (LII), and regular mentions in American Libraries Direct, ALA's electronic newsletter. Numerous other websites have linked to the LHB website which is the primary reason that it achieves such a high Google placement.

The site is divided into three broad categories "Librarians", "Postal Librarians", and "Library History". The "Librarians" section is devoted primarily to collecting library memorabilia and artifacts. The "Postal Librarians" section includes content about postal items related to libraries. The "Library History" section serves as a portal to other library history information on the web. It also includes some of my thoughts on preserving and promoting library history. The "Wisconsin Library Heritage Center" component of this section serves as a prototype for a concept that I have of establishing library heritage centers in each state.

The audience for LHB website is anyone who might have an interest in libraries and librarians. From the contacts and feedback generated by the LHB website, I know that a wide variety of people view the pages on the site. I am routinely contacted with questions about the content on my site from non-librarians. I have discovered, for instance, that there are a surprising number of people who have an interest in card catalog cabinets.

Although I have a great deal of fun developing and maintaining the LHB website, I realize that my personal abilities and resources place limitations on the future development of the website. Hopefully, in a small way, the website may have helped demonstrate that a more robust web presence for library history is warranted and feasible.

Larry T. Nix

Library History Bibliographic Essays to Resume in Libraries & the Cultural Record

In 2008, the journal *Libraries & the Cultural Record* will publish the latest in the journal's series of bibliographic essays on library history. The last essay, which appeared in 2004, covered literature published in the years 2001 and 2002; the forthcoming essay will cover three years of library history publications, 2003 through 2005. It will appear in *L&CR* 43:4, to be published in November 2008. Another literature review will appear in 2009, covering the years 2006 through 2008. The essays will be written by Edward A. Goedeken, humanities bibliographer and professor of library science at Iowa State University. For more information, see: www.ischool.utexas.edu/~lcr (<http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~lcr>).

Janelle Dupont
Managing Editor, L&CR

The Pennsylvania Library Association Archives

A new resource will soon be available to librarians and library history scholars. A committee is organizing the archives of the Pennsylvania Library Association (PaLA), one of ALA's larger chapters. Located at the association's headquarters in Mechanicsburg, the PaLA Archives includes more than a century of library history.

PaLA's roots go back to 1890, when several Pennsylvania librarians noticed and sought to emulate the success of library clubs in other states. They founded the Pennsylvania Library Club (PLC), which sponsored lectures and published a series of papers throughout the 1890s. Because the PLC tended to meet on the Eastern side of the state and was scholarly in its orientation, it became known as a "Philadelphia" organization. In 1896, librarians near Pittsburgh started another group, the Western Pennsylvania Library Association (WPLA). Ultimately, members of PLC and WPLA decided that one, statewide organization was necessary. In 1901 they formed the Keystone State Library Association, PaLA's immediate predecessor.

The PaLA Archives adds much to our knowledge about library development in Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic throughout the twentieth century. It includes information about library book drives and fundraising during World War II, efforts to extend library service to rural areas, Pennsylvania's implementation of National Library Week, intellectual freedom controversies, library efforts during the Bicentennial, and much more. Of particular interest to scholars may be files pertaining to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Library Federation and its conferences. MARLF was a multistate organization which appears to have vanished in the 1990s.

As the twenty-first century dawned, the PaLA Archives was in serious need of care. Over the years, the collection had been moved and rearranged repeatedly. Humidity and acidic folders took their toll. Fortunately, volunteer archivists have come forward to "rehouse" all items in archival-friendly folders and cartons enclosures - an effort that is nearly complete. Soon, the Archives Committee will develop a finding-aid and post historical information to PaLA's web site. The Committee may also digitize selected documents and offer programs on library history and archival work.

If you are interested in the collection, or in Pennsylvania library history, contact Bernadette A. Lear, PaLA Archives Committee Chair, [BAL19@psu.edu](mailto:bal19@psu.edu) (<mailto:bal19@psu.edu>).

Bernadette Lear
Secretary-Treasurer, ALA-LHRT

News in Brief

Wayne Wiegand, F. William Summers Professor of Library and Information Studies at Florida State University, has received a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for University Teachers. The Fellowship will enable him to devote full attention during the academic year 2008-2009 to researching and writing a book he's tentatively entitled, "A People's History of the American Public Library, 1850-2000." Wiegand's was one of only eight proposals given the special "We the People" designation by NEH Chair Bruce Cole for projects aimed at reinvigorating the teaching, study and understanding of American history and culture.

Blackwell's recently published a Companion to the History of the Book. Edited by Simon Eliot and Jonathon Rose, it examines book history in all periods and from a variety of perspectives. It includes a chapter by Wayne Wiegand on "Libraries and the Invention of Information."

Jeremy Dibbel has completed the dual-degree History Archives program at Simmons College. His master's thesis is entitled "'A Library of the Most Celebrated & Approved Authors': The First Purchase Collection of

Union College, an Introduction and Bibliographic Catalogue."

Tom Glynn
LHRT Newsletter co-editor

Conferences and Exhibitions

The Grolier Club in New York will present "Facing the Victorians: Portraits of Writers and Artists from the Mark Samuel Lassner Collection" from February 21 through April 26. 47 E. 60th St., New York. Monday through Saturday, 10 am-5 pm. Free of charge.

The Library History Section of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) will hold its annual Open Session during the World Library and Information Congress, in Québec City, Canada, in August. This year's theme will be the "Promotion and representation of Libraries and Librarians in Non-textual Media." The session will feature presentations by Alistair Black, Ann Curry, and Sjoerd Koopman.

Tom Glynn
LHRT Newsletter co-editor