

## volume 66 number 2 (winter 2002)

### Business

President's Message	2	Sandy Carlson
Treasurer's Report	3	Robert Hook
From the Editors	3	Mark and Sandra
Call for Young Reader's Choice Award Nominations	24	YRCA Committee
Call for Submissions	24	Editors
Submission Guidelines	24	Editors
Errata	24	Editors

### Feature Articles

The Power of Focus Groups	4	Patricia M. Cavill
Through a Library User's Eye: Marketing Images	7	Julie Creaser
Marketing Library and Information Services	10	Sheila Webber
The Internet for School Health Nurses	12	Jama Chorush
The Collaborative Digital Reference Service	15	Peter Gourlay
America Discovers Lewis and Clark	17	John H. Sandy
A Case Against Downsizing	19	Krista Hiebert

### Great Ideas and News

Recruit New Library and Information Professionals	20	Lisa Given
Washington State Library's Information Literacy Project	21	Rhona Klein
News: Closing the Washington State Library	22	Gary Bortel

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# PNLA QUARTERLY

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# President's Message

SANDY CARLSON



## MISSION

*The Pacific Northwest Library Association is an organization of people who work in, with, and for libraries. Its mission is to facilitate and encourage communication, networking, and information exchange for the development and support of libraries and librarianship in the Pacific Northwest.*

### *On Marketing ...*

About a year and a half ago the Library where I work, Kitsap Regional Library, in western Washington, contracted with a marketing consultant as part of a year long effort to promote the Library and its services.

Bremerton is near Seattle, but we face many of the same problems that our rural counterparts do when it comes to getting the word around. The Seattle television stations concentrate on Seattle, 14 miles away by seagull, 1 hour by ferryboat and an hour and a half by automobile. The only radio station in the county does not attract many local listeners and the newspapers reach less than 40% of the population. Even if our library had a bundle to drop on media we still could not have reached our clients with the message we wanted.

Not surprisingly, the consultant, Bill Hoke, produced a weighty report full of practical recommendations—bundled press releases, attractive printed materials, interesting programs and making connections with other local groups. What was surprising was what came next. Library supervisors were asked to come to a morning meeting, where Mr. Hoke stepped out of his role as marketing consultant into another. Mr. Hoke became our coach, encouraging us to take back to our staff members a heightened mindset about excellent customer service. That, he said, was the best way a community based organization with a tiny advertising budget could spread the word about its products and services and build a base of loyal users, like Les Schwab the tire firm. We began by telling stories about great customer service. Most of us had one. Several were Les Schwab stories. Mine was.

One Friday a few years ago I took my van into the dealership where I had purchased it for service. The mechanic worked on the brakes. The next afternoon I left home to drive out to ride Rowdy. The farther I got from home, the mushier my brakes became. The car dealership was on the way so I drove over there, trying to plot out an alternate plan if I arrived after the mechanics had gone home. Sure enough the mechanics at the car dealership had quit for the afternoon. I remembered that there was a Les Schwab dealer over in the same neighborhood, though I'd never been to that store before. I pulled into the parking lot and walked into the store. My appearance was anything but attractive, my old breeches, dirty boots were topped by my very disreputable, orange jacket, the one with the busted zipper and the stuffing coming out. I'm sure I reeked of horse, too. Needless to say I was also flustered. Kitsap County is full of hills. You don't drive with bad brakes. I walked to the counter and explained my dilemma to a courteous young man.

"I think I can help you," he said, "Be about twenty minutes. Relax, have some coffee," he said pointing me to a small waiting area with coffee pots and popcorn machine. About 15 minutes later he reappeared. "Nothing to worry about," he said, "just a valve left opened. We tightened it and added more brake fluid."

"Wonderful, thank you," I said with relief, "What do I owe you?"

"Nothing," he said. "You have Les Swab tires and a Les Swab battery, it's on the house."

I always meant to write a thank you to the store, but I never did. What I have done though is tell that story many times, sharing my good experience with others. And that's what Bill wanted us to understand. It is by offering extraordinary service and building a sense of community and family among our patrons that we heighten awareness of what Libraries do for our communities, be they towns, cities, counties, colleges or other organizations.

### *On Advocacy ...*

Even though my computer at work has spell check and a thesaurus incorporated into its programs, I frequently rely on an old Webster's New Collegiate rescued from a Friends of the Library book sale. Sometimes I can't find the words I need. After all it's inscribed "To James from Grandmother, Christmas 1962," but it does have a definition for advocacy: "act of advocating, pleading for, or supporting."

Our Friends of the Library at my Central Branch has recently lost an advocate. Vi was active in several organizations. She helped dress handicapped swimmers at the YMCA. When the school board was going to cut funding for the buses that brought the children from their schools, she spoke before the school board. When "her" kids from the program had a special day at school, she went to help celebrate. She sold tickets at the children's activities area at our local Festival of Trees, and worked long hours setting up the event. She helped clean the church kitchen and fixed meals for the Wednesday night kid's club. She was an active member of our Friends group.

Vi was not a mover and shaker in our community; she never sat on any Boards or participated on panels. She didn't hobnob with well-to-do business people or make the society columns. She didn't take a leadership role in the

## President's Message cont.

organizations she belonged to, except to act as President of the Friends group when no one else would run. What she did do, though, was work hard and share her enthusiasm about the activity with others. Every book sale would find her the first to arrive for set-up and the last to leave when we tore it down. She always signed up for the most challenging shift, that of opening morning. She told people about our sales and about the Library.

You might have met Violet at PNLA in Corvallis last summer. She was the energetic, white-haired lady at the registration desk. Violet Ellen Carlson died November 14, 2001, of a massive stroke. She was 75. She was my Mother. ▲

## PNLA Treasurer's Report

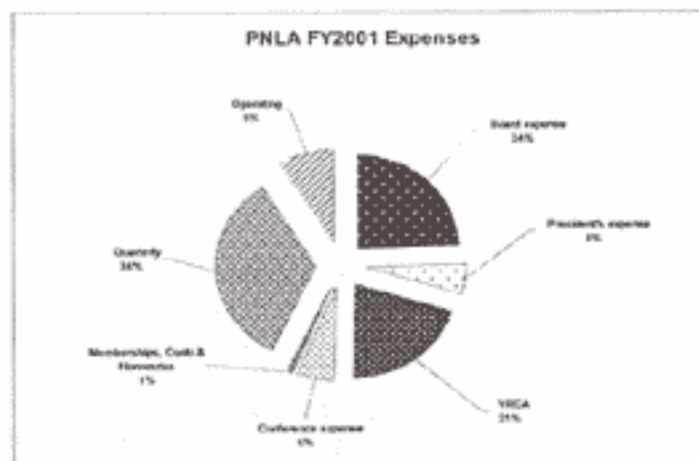
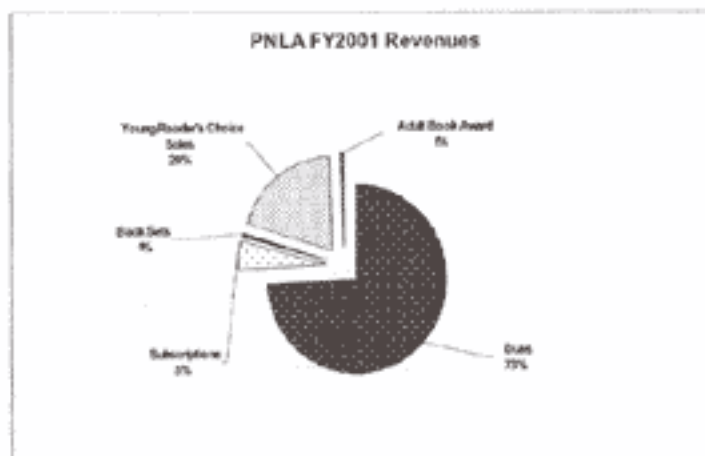
For Fiscal Year 2001

### ROBERT D. HOOK, PNLA TREASURER

This financial report is based on the budget approved by the board on September 30, 2000, and includes the actual expenditures through June 30, 2001. The actual figures with a pie chart have also been published in the *PNLA Quarterly* as part of this report. PNLA's major sources of revenue are dues, Young Reader's Choice Award sales, and the annual conference. Another fund, the Intellectual Freedom Fund, is growing, thanks to the generosity of those of you who have bid in the silent auctions at the conferences. The fund currently has \$3285 in it and is earmarked for projects relating to Intellectual freedom. There will be another silent auction at the Corvallis conference to help this fund.

A glance at the pie chart shows that dues and the Young Reader's Choice Award sales accounted for 93 percent of the revenues in FY 2001. Of this amount, dues represents 73 percent of the total revenues.

A review of the spreadsheet showing actual revenues and expenses shows that today PNLA is financially sound, thanks to the hard work of the Board and the prompt payment of dues by the membership. This is important since, as noted, above dues are the major source of revenue for the organization. Remember: dues are now due payable for the FY2002, and if everyone pays his/her dues on time, then PNLA will continue to be financially sound. Remember that the organization cannot function without you. PNLA needs your help to keep the organization healthy and financially sound. ▲



## From the Editors

MARK and SANDRA

Marketing is what we – all of us – do. We figure out what is needed among our constituents, we look closely at our resources to see how we might meet the observed needs, we develop new services and resources and then get the word out about them, and we measure our constituents' reactions to begin the next cycle of change. Note that this process could be described with exactly the same words regardless of whether the "constituent" is external (our patrons) or internal (our co-workers). We are all marketers.

With that in mind, almost anything we say about how we do our jobs is about marketing to some degree. Three of this issue's articles tackle the topic directly: Patricia Cavill sums up her observations after conducting hundreds of focus groups in libraries to see what our users need and expect from us; Julie Creaser of The Alberta Library reports on a province-wide advocacy campaign; and Sheila Webber discusses resources that will help us learn more about this core aspect of our work.

Once you get into the habit of looking at things from a marketing perspective, the other articles in this issue fit under the same umbrella:

- John Sandy's article on the Lewis & Clark sesquicentennial is an example of observing and preparing for a need;
- Jama Chorush's piece about teaching Internet skills to school health nurses features an assessment of specific needs;
- Peter Gourlay's article discusses LC's acknowledgement of a need and their attempts to create a co-operative service to address it;
- Rhona Klein's report on Washington State Library's Information Literacy Project involves both an initial survey of library use and perception and promotional messages;
- Lisa Given's note about recruiting new library school students by word of mouth is an example of marketing the profession;
- and, finally, Krista Hiebert's look at downsizing alternatives has implications for the resources we need to meet our users' needs and for how we advocate among our funding bodies.

Our thanks to the many people who took the time from their busy schedules to share their experiences with you, their colleagues. ▲