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President's Conference Issue... Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories

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President’s Conference Issue …
Oregon Reads: One State, Many Stories

“And now the old story has begun to
write itself over there,” said Carl softly.
“Isn’t it queer: there are only two or
three human stories, and they go on
repeating themselves as fiercely as if
they had never happened before; like
the larks in this country, that have been
singing the same five notes for thou-
sands of years.”

Willa Cather
O Pioneers!
1913

W were you reminded of
Willa Cather’s quotation
when you heard the OLA
conference theme Oregon Reads: One
State, Many Stories? In this year when
the Oregon Library Association ign-
ited reading and discussion statewide
through the Oregon Reads program,
the importance of stories in identifying
patterns resonates in that quotation
and in that theme. With no lessening
of the uniqueness of each individual’s
story, exposure to many stories sum-
mons us to speak of our commonali-
ties and learn from our histories. “So
attention must be paid” to quote Linda
Loman in Death of a Salesman.

The consciousness-raising about
prejudice toward immigrants that Stub-
born Twig fostered is mirrored in the
selected excerpts about Oregon’s pas-
sage of the Equal Rights Amendment
by Betty Roberts and Gail Wells. Betty
Roberts keynoted at the 2009 OLA
Conference and told stories from her
legislative and judicial career that are
important to remember. Our present-
day workplaces and our lives are
better due to the movements of recent
history with which Betty and others
worked. Betty’s stories are rich with
lessons about collaboration, consensus,
and compromise as illustrated in her
memories of the E.R.A. in Oregon.
One of the repeated human stories is
that patterns of prejudice can be over-
come, often assisted by the passage of
civil rights statutes.

Patterns of a different nature are
sorted out by Robert Hulshof-Schmidt
in his article analyzing the 2009 Con-
ference evaluations. Robert’s experi-
ence with many conferences is evident
in his recommendations for future
conferences, advice to get involved,
and recognition of Oregon’s collegial
library association.

Proving that the larks in Ukraine
sing the same five notes, Maya Tara-
sova’s account of her Sister City visit
to the United States of America, Corval-
lis-Benton County Public Library, and
the OLA conference virtually hums
with international optimism. Relief
and pride that libraries in our two
countries share core principles can be
heard throughout this piece.

Kim Marsh Read helps us enter the
patterned and often solitary world of
children with autism. Recounting her
learnings from a program at the OLA
Conference Kim shares the advice of
therapists and a mom about how librar-
ies can better provide service and a wel-
coming environment to these children.

Improving service to another often
misunderstood and underserved group
is the subject of my dialogue with
Heydi Smith. Heydi had her first OLA
conference experience when she at-
tended the “Got Teens?” preconference.
Heydi’s perspective on the preconfer-
ence, what she learned, and how she
applied what she learned is an example
of the cycle of learning we’ve all under-
gone at conferences.

Two personal stories of “how I
came to work in libraries” by Margaret
Harmon-Myers and Bonnie Carolee
Hirsch share the pattern of early library
use that did not stir interest in the pro-
fession despite a love of reading. Follow
their career detours to the present where
both Margaret and Carolee are library
employees engaged in serving the public.

Lauren Kessler’s paean exulting
in Oregon’s readers rounds out the
President’s issue. Heartened by the fact
of “one state, many readers” Lauren
brings us back to the compelling theme
and pattern of stories “about the power
of stories in our lives, about how stories
can tell us who we are and who we
were.” So attention must be paid …

Guest Editor
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OLA President, 2008–09

P.S. Please see well-deserved recognition
of the Oregon Reads Committee, donors,
and partners on the last page of this issue.