July 2014

An Introduction from the Editor

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What did you wear on your first date? Who was your favorite music group when you were in high school? What kinds of things were you reading?

Do you remember your adolescent years with fondness or angst? Teenagers today are not so different from teenagers of every generation. They have hopes, dreams, goals, and desires to make the world a better place. They are growing up, searching for identity, excited and scared. They are also facing issues that many of us could never have expected.

Whether a public library, a school, college, university or special library, each of our libraries is growing up, searching for identity in this information explosion, and creating new goals every day. How can we meld the two, making our libraries comfortable for teens, is a challenge we all face.

Several Oregon librarians found a way to work on this challenge by forming a group called the Oregon Young Adult Network. OYAN was born in the late 1980s when a group of Youth Librarians wanted to begin working on activities for teens. They formed a young adult interest group of public and school librarians who began meeting quarterly on an informal basis to share ideas, information, book reviews, and support.

Today OYAN is still meeting on a quarterly basis, but now as a division of OLA. Attendees include library school students, Young Adult Librarians, Children’s Librarians, support staff who work with teens, and Media Specialists. It has a growing membership, publishes a quarterly newsletter called the OYAN Review, and presents workshops at annual conferences of several organizations. Beginning in 2000, OYAN created its Book Rave, an annual list of YA favorites that no library should be without.

In the workshops I present, I find all levels of library staff who want to improve their skills in working with teens. Many staff members did not grow up with young adult literature as varied as we have today. Reader’s Advisory is a huge concern. Teens’ interests change as fast as their outfits, how can we keep up? The teens of today are most fortunate to have a wealth of young adult literature at their fingertips: fiction which is realistic, poignant, humorous, fantastic, mysterious, and extremely well-written, along with non-fiction on every personal issue imaginable.

Library staff need to be aware of what is out there for teens. There are many fine resources available to assist libraries in designing programs and services for teens. Books are being published all the time, Web sites are created and magazine articles written on how to work with adolescents in our buildings. Colleges and universities want students who are knowledgeable, well read, and able to speak and write. High schools want students ready to learn, able to do research, and excited about the learning process. Public libraries want teens who love to read, are willing to serve on an advisory board, or who will volunteer to help with Summer Reading.

This issue of the OLAQ will show you how far Oregon libraries have come in serving young adults, enjoy this issue of the Oregon Library Association Quarterly.

—Anne Guevara
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Guest Editor