

Prepared for:

WLA Continuing Education Committee

Web content strategy and information architecture project

David Talley

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Learner Personas

Sandra Corcoran

Youth Services Librarian, Seattle Public Library

Sandra began her career with SPL when she took a circ desk position at the Ballard branch in 1990, after a series of jobs of all kinds after completing the theater program at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. Experience over 2 years convinced her that library work was the right choice for her, and she completed her MLIS degree from UW in 1995. She then took a reference job at the Capitol Hill branch in 1996 and moved to youth services at the Southwest Branch in 2002. Her commitment to youth and teen outreach, combined with a flair for event programming, earned her a position at the Central Library in 2008. Sandra is a long-time ALA and WLA member.



- One of a large staff, although pressed by cutbacks over several years.
- Loves to coordinate with schools and teachers, but scheduling and programming are difficult.
- Tech skills advance faster that she can keep up, especially with e-reader devices.
- Kids use many different tools at home and school, come in more familiar than she is, but only with certain devices.
- Worries about teens, esp. large at-risk population, but they seem to be more in a digital world than the real world; wonders how to connect with them there.
- Considers the library as a place for information exchange between people, not just a warehouse of books; new ideas for events and activities are always energizing and welcome.
- Changes in the community add challenge in cultural adaptation and language fluency.
- Burnout is a high risk.

Annette Petrie

Yakima Central Library Manager

Annette began her library career in California after completing the MLIS degree at San Jose State in 1998. She moved to Yakima to take care of her ailing mother in 2002, starting at the ref desk in an outlying branch. She moved to a central library reference position in 2004, rose to reference manager in 2007, and became overall branch manager in 2010.

A former WLA member and conference attendee, she checks the website quarterly or bi-monthly. Her membership renewal form sits on her desk under a pile of other paperwork.

- Misses reference work, and even staff interaction – too much time on paperwork, facilities, county budgeting politics.
- Wants to support staff in older adult services, esp. readers advisory and health/medical research but also legal research.
- Recruiting is tough, even with only occasional openings, because she's hiring from an aging workforce with dated tech skills.
- Budget cutbacks and HR challenges are tougher.
- Really enjoyed a staff retreat 3 years ago, especially initial ice-breaker activity and team-building exercises; would like to repeat that and make it a regular thing at the branch and systemwide.
- Also enjoyed networking with other library managers at the WLA annual meeting in 2010, right after getting the job. Hasn't been able to return, but sometimes emails with a couple people met then.
- Wants staff to have available self-management courses: working with difficult patrons, calm in a crisis, stress management.

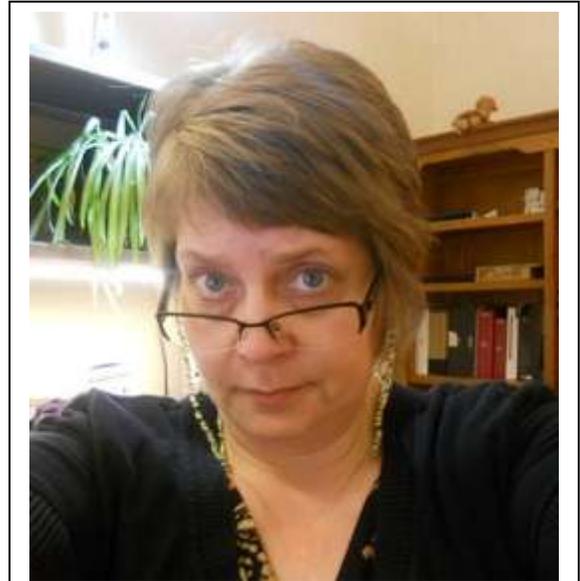


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Bill Dyson

Catalog and Technical Services Walla Walla Community College Library

Bill started as copy cataloger in 2005 and became lead cataloger in steps since then. He has learned on the job, once considering an online MLIS degree from UW but deciding against taking on student loan debt.

His job has expanded over the years to include applications of self-taught computer skills, dabbling with the web tools within the library's ILS package, and experimenting with electronic display technologies. He's never joined WLA or ALA, but he regularly skims the library copy of ALA's *Information Outlook* and reads the occasional article if he has time and interest.

- Logged many hours of training over the years – vendor half-day workshops, online lessons.
- Frustrated by vendor trainers talking at the class, with no chance for hands-on trials of new features.
- Knows all the quirks of the vendor system used by the library, and hates some of them, but fears and resists replacement software – better the devil you know.
- Even version upgrades can disrupt established workflows, and enhancements to the online catalog function are mostly confusing and maybe not worth the trouble – his or the patron's.
- Feels threatened by Google and Wikipedia, but unsure about how to respond to patrons' clear preference for those "easy" options.
- Wants to branch out and learn new tech tools, both to relieve the routine of cataloging and to improve service to tech-savvy students.
- Much prefers printed books over e-books, but student demand for digital formats forces attention to those technologies; as the default techie on staff, it's up to him to recommend choices among a dizzying array of options that would be the best use of limited budget for readers and media.
- Interested in exploring video kiosk packages as an alternative to outdated and largely ignored bulletin boards.



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Evie Salas

Library Associate IV, Jefferson County Library

Evie found that she enjoyed library work through a part-time circulation assistant job with Eugene Public Library while completing her BA in English Literature from University of Oregon. It felt like a great step up from her freshman-year job at a mall bookstore! After graduation in 2002, she worked as a teaching assistant, but the classroom never felt comfortable. While visiting her grandmother in a rural area of the Olympic Peninsula in 2005, a rare opening for Library Associate II was advertised, and on impulse Evie applied and landed the job.

By 2010, she had been promoted to Library Associate IV. She knows she'll need a master's degree to have a shot at becoming head librarian when her boss retires in a few years, but she's hesitant to go back to school. And truly, she feels her experience is good preparation, because she's learned so many aspects of library work over time and taken on so many different challenges. The credential requirement really feels like a sort of classism, and she dislikes the sort of us-them division that separates "paraprofessional" staff from degreed librarians and management.

- Duties span nearly every function of a tiny library.
- Fills in if anyone else is out sick or for training or meetings at other locations.
- Helps patrons troubleshoot computer issues; mostly, that involves the library's networked machines but patrons ask for help connecting their personal laptops to the library wi-fi network, sometimes resulting in confusing error messages – Who could ever understand all the possible settings and variables???
- Also gets questions about software functions, and she can answer most of those about Microsoft Office as a user over the years, although each new release creates new obstacles; instructional roles seem forced on her by circumstances, with no intention or desire of her own.
- Sometimes is in charge of the branch when the librarian is not working
- Has to control the environment with many kids wanting to be loud after school, families coming in throughout the day and adult patrons wanting a quiet place to work or read.
- Feels she has learned a lot during a couple half-day workshops sponsored by the library's ILS vendor, although the 120-mile roundtrip to attend was frustrating. She really enjoyed comparing notes with staff from other libraries she met there, but time weakened good intentions to stay in touch, and she feels isolated from colleagues and new developments in the profession.

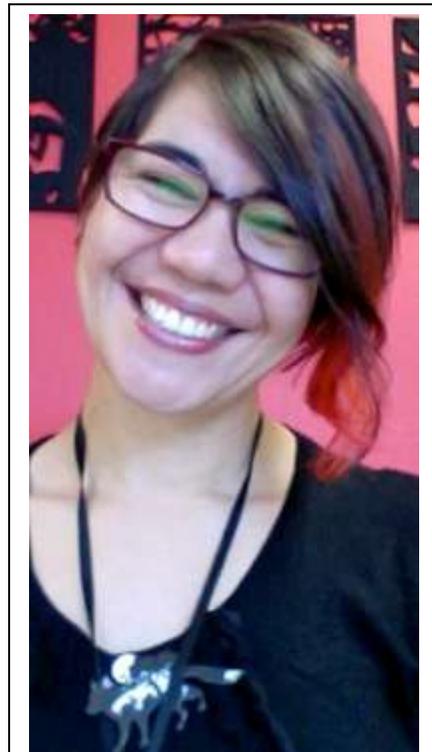


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Misha Duong

Mid-Columbia part-time Library Associate II

Misha took a half-time job (20 hours per week) as a shelver and circ desk assistant when she graduated high school in 2008. After a couple promotions, she still works part-time because she also helps her parents run their convenience store in Kennewick. She has put off questions about going away to college due to that family commitment and uncertainty about what university life would be like. She's happy enough with her friends and her job for now, although promotions are always of interest.

- Shifts include every other weekend and one evening per week.
- Flexible schedule benefits employer but sometimes feels like a strain.
- Because of the weekends and night, does not have many consistent days at the Library (like every Monday).
- Frequently surprised by new memos posted in the staff workroom, because her schedule differs so much from those of managers, preventing opportunities for regular, day-to-day communication.
- Would like to learn more about the functions of the ILS beyond basic checkout and check-in, because that would open new chances for promotion.
- Working in a rural library system means training typically involves travel; she fills in for others while they're away, but has only been sent for one vendor seminar so far.
- Irregular schedule makes scheduling trainings difficult; sometimes recorded webinars and other online sessions are available, but it's tough to fit time for that around regular duties.
- Looked through catalogs of online classes from WebJunction, available via Washington State Library, but she's not sure which would be worth the time and trouble.
- Wants hands-on work to help understand technology topics, because instructors talking at her just get boring and she loses interest.
- Active user of Facebook and sometimes checks the library's page there, but she's always disappointed that no one posts very much or even notices it's there.



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Meredith Green

K-8 School Librarian, Lynnwood

Meredith taught third through fifth grade for 10 years before returning to graduate school over three summers to earn a school library certificate. Now, 17 years later, she still can't imagine doing any other job. She loves attending the ALA Annual Conference whenever it happens on the West Coast (so she can afford to pay for the trip herself, because the school budget includes no funds for anything like that) where she wears out a pair of shoes scouring the exhibit hall booths for new books. In working with students, she still emphasizes what she calls "real" books, although she has willingly helped teachers to work e-books and computer media into their lesson plans.

Doing more with less has become second nature as her school's budget has shrunk and shrunk again. She wonders whether the school will fund a replacement for her when she retires in several years. Mostly she's too busy to think about that question, with class sessions to teach, meetings with teachers to coordinate lesson planning, events of her own to plan, and all the other stuff she does to promote a love of reading among students.

- Reuses older resources and welcomes donations to fill the gap between a falling acquisition budget and rising prices, especially for e-books and other electronic resources.
- Struggles to keep up with new e-reader platforms and so-called "upgrades" in existing ones. She's grateful when the students can help teach her how the gadgets work, based on their experience from home and elsewhere.
- Learned to maintain and troubleshoot 10 library PCs after the district cancelled funding for visiting technology support staff who used to take care of that.
- Tries to remember to stay in touch with the youth librarian at the local Sno-Isle Libraries branch to share plans about upcoming topics and events, so each can support the other's programs; it's tough to find time for coordination in the midst of so much going on around the school building.



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