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You Might Find You Get What You Need

by Julie Miller

*You've got to give the people, now
Give the people what they want
--The O-Jays*

When the O-Jays sang their hit song "Give the People What They Want" in 1975, they could have had no idea that thirty-three years later it would become one of the theme songs for Barack Obama's presidential campaign. The sentiment resonates as strongly now as it did then. As any political leader knows, the challenge is to determine just what the people want, and then to have the resources, means, and will to deliver it.

We who work in the library community face this challenge all of the time: it is in the unspoken request at the heart of the reference interview, in the choices we make between "popular" and "literary" novels with a shrinking collections budget, in the decision to limit one program (ready to read?) in order to expand another (computer literacy for adult learners?). The articles in this issue of *Alki* explore the challenges of finding out what our communities want and then delivering it to them.

Some of the articles focus on techniques for eliciting input from library constituents. In "A Process for Giving People What They Want," Mary Getchell describes Pierce County Library System's reiterative process for listening and responding to community needs. E. H. Baxter and Alec McKay explain how the Friends of the Waterville Library used the "snowball" method of surveying their community at little cost, but with big results. In "Giving the Community What It Wants," librarians from Timberland Regional Library share with Bo Kinney tips for hosting community chats to glean insight into the community.

*It's a unanimous decision
I said they're ready for a change, yeah, yeah, yeah*

Other articles focus on delivering the goods. In "Quiet Please," Theresa Kappus describes the Foley Center Library's response to




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Gonzaga college students who wanted more quiet in the library. Ahniwa Ferrari tells the story of the Washington State Library's Hard Times Resource Guide, a Web site created to help Washington libraries meet the needs of the unemployed. Lynne King and the newly formed ILL team at Highline Community College Library find support among peers at the Northwest Interlibrary Loan and Resource Sharing Conference. When voters overwhelmingly exclaimed, "We want a new library!" by passing the largest bond in Richland's history, the Richland Public Library accepted the challenge; Julie McMakin shares the gratifying results. (We should all be so lucky!)

After a hiatus (the reason of which will become clear when you read her article), Angelina Benedetti is back with a new Solinus column that will make you smile. David Wright offers gift book suggestions for the readers (and non-readers) on your list. This issue of *Alki* has lots of WLA news. Meet Kate Laughlin, a long-time WLA member who has been hired as the new WLA Continuing Education program coordinator. Catch up on people and places and find out the theme for the 2010 WLA/PNLA joint conference in Victoria.

*We want freedom, justice, and equality
I want it for you and I want it for me.*

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