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## National Library Legislative Day 2011

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## Library Legislative Day in Olympia 2010

by Julie Miller and Rand Simmons

Here's a reference question for you: What do the names Cannon, Dirksen, Hart, Longworth, Russell, and Rayburn have in common? If you answered "names of the Congressional office buildings in Washington, DC," you get a gold star! We got to know these names well when we attended the National Library Legislative Day 2011 on May 9–10 as the WLA delegates representing Washington libraries.

### ALA Briefings

On Monday, May 9, we joined delegates from 45 other states at briefings on current legislative issues presented by staff of ALA's Washington Office and their consultants. Following an overview of the current political climate, they presented key federal legislative issues for libraries:

- Appropriations for FY2012, including funding the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) at its authorized level of \$232 million and preserving a budget line of \$19.1 million for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries (ILSL) program;
- Support for student performance by including effective school library programs as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) through the Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act;
- Broadband & telecommunications issues related to libraries, including permanent exemption for libraries from cash-flow regulations for the E-rate program and support for network neutrality;
- Inclusion of libraries in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) through the Workforce Investment through Local Libraries (WILL) Act (H.R. 1616) to insure public libraries are eligible partners in workforce development initiatives;
- Support for legislation related to copyright and orphan works (works for which copyright holder is unknown) to make it easier for libraries to provide access to orphan works without fear of statutory damages;
- Increased public access to federally funded research and continued funding for government information, including the U.S. Census Bureau's publications (e.g., Statistical Abstract, etc.) and the Government Printing Office's operations;
- Revision of certain provisions of the Patriot Act, set to expire on May 27, 2011, to protect the rights to privacy of innocent Americans.

*Rand Simmons is Acting Washington State Librarian and a seasoned member of the Washington delegation to National Library Legislative Day. Julie Miller is Associate Dean of Libraries at Eastern Washington University and coordinated WLA's participation in NLLD 2011 with advice and guidance from Kristie Kirkpatrick, for which she is much obliged.*

Later, the two of us met to prioritize the issues and develop a strategy for meeting with the legislative assistants for several of Washington's members of Congress. Throughout the day, we heard the repeated message that very little would move through Congress until legislators resolved the U.S. debt limit crisis; only after the debt limit debate was over would the FY2012 budget and other issues, especially education legislation, be addressed. At the same time, bills introduced by early summer might have a chance for action prior to the August recess—anything not introduced by summer is likely to become caught in the 2012 elections.

Taking all of these issues as well as state budget concerns into consideration, we decided to focus on three key areas: 1) appropriations for LSTA and ILSL; 2) support for early childhood learning and K–12 student success by inclusion of public and school libraries in the ESEA; and 3) support for broadband/E-rate issues.

### Meetings on Capitol Hill

Our itinerary for Tuesday included three visits prior to lunch and four visits following—a full day's work. We met with legislative assistants in the offices of Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and of Representatives Norm Dicks, Jaime Herrera Beutler, Jim McDermott, Adam Smith, and Cathy McMorris Rogers. Although we were unable to schedule appointments, we also visited the offices of Representatives Jay Inslee, Rick Larsen, Doc Hastings, and Dave Reichert to leave information packets for the legislative assistants working on education and/or technology policy.

At the beginning of each meeting, Rand provided a summary of how LSTA funds had been used in the individual Congressional district in FY2010 based on documents prepared by staff at the State Library.



Julie Miller and Rand Simmons on Capitol Hill, May 10, 2011

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alternate writing chapters, and the end of each chapter includes critiques that quickly and hilariously digress to being more about their failed relationship than the story.

*Hold Me Closer, Necromancer* by Lish MacBride: This horror/humor hybrid features Sam, a Seattle fast food employee who suddenly finds himself in possession of the power to raise the dead. Unfortunately for him, there's already a necromancer in town, and he's not interested in healthy competition. When Sam's coworker shows up missing her body below the neck (but still maintaining a positive attitude), he realizes the battle is on. With the support of his friends and a lovely werewolf girl, he must learn to control his powers before it's too late.

*Hush* by Eishes Chayil: Gittel lives in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Brooklyn, where Oprah Winfrey is mostly unheard of and holiness—or the appearance of it—is everything. Gittel knows why her best friend Devory died, but her future may depend on her silence.

*The Lock Artist* by Steve Hamilton: Mike Smith can crack any safe and pick every lock he encounters. He works mysteriously and quietly—with an emphasis on quiet, since he hasn't said a word since the night his parents died when he was eight. Ten years later, Mike's in prison and has the time to write down his story. An Edgar winner that inspired at least one of us to revisit her earlier attempts at lock picking.

*Revolver* by Marcus Sedgwick: Professional reviewers compare this title to the work of Cormac McCarthy and Jack London. A young man stands alone in a cold, bare shack north of the Arctic Circle—alone, that is, except for the corpse of his father, frozen in a corner. There is an ominous knock at the door.

*Shades of Milk and Honey* by Mary Robinette Kowal takes place in a world similar to Jane Austen's Regency England, where truly accomplished young women play the pianoforte, cover screens, speak several languages, and, of course, perform magic.

*The Year We Were Famous* by Carole Estby Dagg: Many book groups around Washington have read and discussed *Bold Spirit* by Linda Hunt, a nonfiction book about Helga Estby and her daughter's 1896 walk from Spokane to New York in an attempt to win \$10,000 to save their Mica Creek farm. Now Carole Estby Dagg has taken her great grandmother and great aunt's story and crafted a historical novel from 18-year-old Clara's point of view. Worth noting: The author, a librarian, was formerly the assistant director of Everett Public Library. 

<sup>1</sup> We work at the Central Library in downtown Seattle; we made up the sunny part of this story, but not our acknowledgment that a day without suspicious liquids or odors is a beautiful thing worth noting.

<sup>2</sup> Alphabetical order by title. Mixing it up even more and challenging your organizational inclinations.

**“ S. 929's increased emphasis on libraries is evidence that your phone calls and e-mails really can and did make a difference! ”**

Without exception, legislative staff found this district-specific information very useful, and it also provided an opportunity for us to relate specific anecdotes about library users to illustrate the importance of LSTA funds to delivering library services to constituents in the district. We also drew upon briefing sheets developed by ALA, which were included in the information packets.

During the course of the seven meetings, we presented the three key areas in the same order, but we varied the emphasis and the anecdotes depending upon each legislator's committee assignments, history of support, or personal passions. The day was challenging—mentally and physically—as we hiked from building to building, through metal detectors and back again, looking for the green flag of Washington down the gray marble halls.

#### Being the Change

Perhaps our most significant meeting was the first of the day with a legislative staff member in Senator Patty Murray's office, where we learned the senator was going to introduce the LEARN Act (S. 929) that afternoon. Just a few weeks earlier, we had called on WLA and WLMA members to contact Murray's office to ask her to include public and school libraries and librarians in the language of the bill to insure they would be eligible for funding if the bill becomes law.

When Rand called the ALA Washington Office to let them know the bill was being introduced that very day, Executive Director Emily Sheketoff answered the phone with “You've done your job!” She was reading the new bill with a yellow highlighter in hand to flag the phrases relevant to libraries. The new bill uses the terms *library*, *libraries*, or *librarians* as resources for literacy education fourteen times, more than twice the number mentioned in the LEARN Act introduced in the 111th Congress.

The LEARN Act, which will probably be folded into ESEA as part of education reform, is still a long way from becoming law. But the bill's increased emphasis on libraries is evidence of the power of grassroots advocacy: your phone calls and e-mails really can and did make a difference! (The text of S. 929 can be found at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.)

To monitor legislation of interest to the Washington library community, please visit ALA's legislative action Web site at <http://capwiz.com/ala/home/>. You'll also find information about how to take action. 