OPINION

Guest Editorial

Building Community: Traditional or Virtual, Libraries Thrive in All Dimensions

By Wayne Onkst, Kentucky State Librarian and Commissioner Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives

Are books passé? Have library stacks been outpaced by memory sticks? Are large echo-laden library halls just for get-together-ers?

Some would say our libraries are obsolete, a quaint vestige of our past. This is not a view held by anyone who has visited a library lately. Use of Kentucky libraries continues to increase dramatically every year, serving more people in more ways than ever before.

April 13-19 is the 50th anniversary of National Library Week, a time when libraries of all types and the people who use them come together with the American Library Association to celebrate the contributions of all libraries, librarians and library workers in our nation's schools, campuses and communities. It is also a great opportunity to get to know the library of the 21st century. This year's theme, Join the Circle of Knowledge @ Your Library, is an invitation to do just that.

By using a variety of approaches to meet customers expressed needs and offering programs and services that offer something for everyone, libraries today have transformed not only themselves but the communities that they serve. Public, school, college and university libraries are flourishing not only within the physical confines of bricks and mortar, steel and glass, but also in the continuously expanding Internet universe. Rather than threatening our libraries, the age of technology has complemented libraries' services and expanded their reach.

Today's libraries bridge the computer and technology divide. Kentucky public libraries provide free Internet access and over 2,900 public access computers. For many who don't have computers or high-speed Internet access at home, our public libraries make the difference between decent wages and economic disenfranchisement.

The facts speak for themselves: library use is up nationwide. More than 2 billion items were checked out last year, and librarians serve nearly 1.8 billion visitors annually. In Kentucky over 2 million people hold library cards. Last year alone, more than 1 million people participated in children's programs across the commonwealth. This success speaks to the fact that libraries are about more than information and data sharing. Libraries are about community.

At the library, people from diverse backgrounds can come together for meetings and lectures, do research with personalized assistance, apply for jobs or get homework help. Free computer classes for youth through seniors are offered, as well as summer reading programs for children, teens and adults, and workshops on topics from ice sculpture to photography to effective parenting. Trained information professionals – librarians – foster inquiry, assist with interpretation of information both onsite and online, and support the education and literacy efforts of the educational community. Given all of this, it's easy to see why libraries have become vital community centers.

Additionally, libraries are leading the way in forging creative public-private charitable partnerships with a new generation of supporters like the Bill & Melinda Gates Library Foundation, this year celebrating 11 years of major financial support for computer equipment, software and training at our nation's libraries.

These efforts aren't simply charitable. Education and literacy are essential to staying competitive in a global society. Recent

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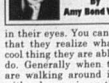
Veloz Viewpoints

Greetings from Nevada! I hope you are all having a great week.

We have lots of new things going on at our house. I guess that is pretty much expected given the age of our children. They grow and change so fast at this age.



First things first, I can officially say that our children are walking. Yes, they do still crawl quite a bit, but they have gotten the walking thing down pretty good. It is so fun for Ben and I to sit across the room from each other and tell them to walk to us and then watch them do it.

I am a little afraid of how I'm going to be able to keep up with both of them when they are walking 100 percent of the time. I guess the good news is I will be in good shape when that happens. I also love the sense of accomplishment that they have in their eyes. You can see that they realize what a cool thing they are able to do. Generally when they are walking around it is with a huge grin on their faces.

Speaking of their eyes, that is another new thing at our house. They are able to say the word eyes and point to where they are on themselves and on whomever is asking. Of course, the askee has to be careful as they tend to push a little hard on the eyeball! It is really cute too. When you ask them where their eyes are they squint them and then point. Their little faces are so adorable!

Now we are working on where the nose is. Occasionally they point to the nose but mostly still the eyes. They are trying hard though. It is so fun to watch them, you can see their little wheels turning aws they try to put it all together.

The last new thing at our house is we are trying a "big boy" bed. We bought a twin bed at a yard sale this past weekend and then went a furniture store and got a new mattress for it. We sat it up on Saturday night for him to try it out. The first night we woke up a couple times but all it took to comfort him was for one of us to lay down with him for just a little bit and he was back to sleep.

Sunday night he was asleep right away and slept until eight on Monday morning. It is a little hard to get him to nap as I can't just lay him down and leave the room. He just climbs right off the bed, opens the bedroom door and is on his way to find me. I'm hoping that gets better soon and I think it will. The next step is going to be separating them into different rooms. Their room is just too crowded trying to fit a toy box, a dresser, two beds and a changing table. Even without the changing table, there is just not enough room.

I'm a little sad to separate them, but I think it will be the best thing for the both of them.

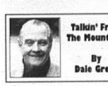
It sure amazes me how quickly they are growing up. I am so blessed to be able to be home with them everyday and watch them grow. I am so glad I'm not missing a single moment with them.

Until next week, make it a great one!

Amy

Talkin' From The Mountains

Smoking, politics and other stuff



There have been a lot of rumblings recently around the state about raising the tax on cigarettes. Some politicians are saying we shouldn't raise taxes on cigarettes because it will put an economic burden on poor people.

Huh? You mean they will no longer be able to afford their drug addiction? Well, isn't that too bad. Maybe smokers who can't afford their addiction should get help and kick the habit. Truth is everybody—even those who can afford to smoke—should kick the habit.

We know the health risks, but what about the economic problems smoking causes individuals and families?

I'm not real good at math, but I've been doing some "ciphering" as Jethro used to say on the Beverly Hillbillys about the cost of smoking.

I was standing in line at the little grocery store up from my house recently when a real poor looking guy pulled up in a beat up old car and ran in to get a pack of cigarettes. I watched the cash register ring up $4.12.

Holy Mackerel! 4.12? For one pack of cigarettes? That's lunch! Drug addictions are expensive.

A friend of mine says it costs him $7.00 a day for cigarettes. That's $49.00 a week (a lot of groceries); $196.00 a month (a car payment); or $2,352.00 a year (that will buy lots of nice things). And often both spouses in a family smoke, so double that.

What a shame to spend that much money on something that will probably kill you, or make you into an invalid who has to carry around an oxygen tank.

How about smokers who are on welfare? Many people are spending a small fortune on cigarettes paid for with our tax money. Should taxpayers pay for somebody's drug addiction? I'll pay to get someone cured of tobacco, but I resent paying for their cigarettes.

Here's an idea. Why not tell individuals on welfare that they must enter a stop smoking program. The state could provide the program provide program free of charge. That would be tax money well spent. It would save the state a lot of money (not to mention lives) in the long run.

I don't know how you would enforce such a program. We can't deprive a poor child of food because his parents don't have the willpower to quit smoking, but maybe if we insisted that welfare recipients who smoke go into some kind of program, we could get many of them off cigarettes.

And I don't mean to imply it's easy to quit. I know how tough it is. I quit about 15 years ago and I suffered.

It wasn't easy but it sure was worth it. Who knows, I might not be here today if I hadn't quit.

Smoking is a horrible addiction. It's a killer! Tobacco causes more than 98 billion dollars in medical expenses in the U.S. each year and almost 500,000 people die prematurely, many the innocent victims of second hand exposure.

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A few notes from here and there:

I'm sure many of you hear Dan Manley on Gateway broadcasting's radio stations. Take it from an old radio and television man, Mister Manley is doggone good. He could easily get a job in a bigger market. It's a plus for all of us that he wants to stay around here. Enjoy listening to you, Dan.

...

Whistle blowers are stepping up and saying that a bunch of U.S. airlines are unsafe because of the chummy relationship between the FAA and Airline executives that have allowed airlines not to follow safety rules.

It was bad enough when Bush turned the writing of the nation's Energy Plan over to the corrupt Enron Company and other energy corporations but to allow corporations to dictate airline safety is really criminal.

Allowing corporations to write and dictate safety regulations for our nation is akin to turning a henhouse over to a bunch of foxes.

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Saw in the Lexington Herald Leader where UK Coach Billy Gillispie said he was thrilled when he met Vice President Dick Cheney because he had met the "second greatest leader in the world." Hope Billy can evaluate potential players better than he can evaluate leaders.

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Lots of people know I'm a Democrat from this column so lots of them are asking me if I saw former President Clinton when he was in Morehead. I have nothing against Bill and Hillary but I tell them that there is only one event that would motivate me to stand for hours crammed in a room with 3,000 people and that would be the Last Supper with the original cast.

...

Congratulations to Louisville and Western Kentucky for a great showing for our state in the NCAA Basketball tournament. We should be proud of all our state schools, and don't worry, the cats will be back!

Dale Greer is a member of the faculty at Morehead State University. He has an expansive background in media including award winning reporting and stints as a major television anchor and talk show host. He can be reached via email at ddgreer@roadrunner.com.

Fourth District Report

Support Our Troops

In light of the recent five year anniversary of the War in Iraq, it is important that we take time to remember our men and women in uniform who are serving our country abroad. Since September 2001, more than 16,000 Kentuckians have served in the Global War on Terror. As your Congressman, I want to share some ways that you can get involved in our communities to help support our troops.

Through the organization America Supporting Americans, cities across Kentucky have adopted military units and are providing support and care packages for our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. Kentucky's Fourth District has adopted more units than any other Congressional District in the country. This commitment is demonstrative of the giving spirit and patriotism that runs deep in the Commonwealth. To learn more or to get involved, please visit http://www.asa-usa.org/. Alexandria, Ashland, Bellevue, Cold Spring, Covington, Crestview Hills, Edgewood, Elsmere, Erlanger, Florence, Fort Mitchell, Fort Wright, Independence, Lakeside Park, Union and Villa Hills are all participating in this effort.

The city of Taylor Mill has been involved with America Supporting Americans for several years. Since October 2005, the city's Adopt-A-Troop Committee has sent care packages to the 3/0 soldiers from the 1-320th Field Artillery Regiment from Ft. Campbell, Kentucky. The city also recently adopted forty-four troops from the 18th Ordinance Company (Explosive Ordinance Detachment) out of Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. Currently, they are collecting items to include in their monthly care packages. To find out what items are needed and how you can get involved, please contact the city building at (859) 581-3234.

The cities of Crescent Springs and Villa Hills have each adopted a unit from the 1-320th Field Artillery Regiment, currently stationed in Iraq. Last month, the two towns waged a friendly competition to see which city could collect the most boxes of Girl Scout cookies to send to their troops. In the end, Crescent Springs edged out a victory, collecting 109 boxes. The cookies were shipped to the troops at the end of March.

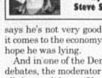
You can also show your support through America Supports You. The website, http://www.americasupportsyou.mil/, allows you to send personal messages of support to our troops serving abroad. In addition, it provides information and resources on other ways to say thank you.

On April 8 and 9, General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker will testify before Congress to update all of us on the situation in Iraq. Progress has been made in Iraq, in no small measure due to the service and sacrifices of our men and women in uniform. We all want to see our troops come home, but we also need to remember that the choices we make in Iraq will affect our national security for years to come.

We can all be proud of the support for our men and women in uniform shown by communities and organizations throughout the Fourth District. I hope that you and your family will take time to say thank you to our service members.

OPINION

Steve's Report



This week, I want to add my prayers and support to the brave Soldiers of Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery. I am so very proud to wear the same uniform as these heroes who are risking their lives to help others.

As the political debates heat up, Iraq is obviously one of the issues that has voter interest – unfortunately not as much interest as the economy and the crisis caused by years of careless lending practices. I heard on the radio that in July 2007, 15 percent of the news stories were about Iraq. By February of this year, that amount dropped to 3 percent.

So this is one good thing about the political process. The American public wants to know how the candidates plan to deal with Iraq, which brings some attention back onto the situation over there.

Senator Obama says he will start withdrawing troops right away and Senator Clinton has come around and said about the same thing. Senator McCain says an immediate withdrawal would be irresponsible.

But can we really believe what they tell us? Senator Obama promised union workers that he would dismantle the North American Free Trade Agreement, and then told Canada officials that this was just an empty campaign promise. Senator Clinton said she opposes a free trade agreement with Columbia, but her husband accepted $800,000 from Columbia to help make it happen. Senator McCain says he's not very good when it comes to the economy – let's hope he was lying.

And in one of the Democrat debates, the moderator asked all the candidates, "Yes or no, if elected will you commit to having all of our troops out of Iraq by the end of your first four-year term in office?" In spite of all their big talk about pulling troops out of Iraq, when asked the question directly, none one would commit to a complete withdrawal by 2012.

I just wanted to point this out – that in spite of all the campaign promises about bringing our troops back home – no matter who gets elected it's not going to happen. There may be some troop reductions over that time, but I think it's pretty safe to say we'll still be sending Soldiers over there for a few more years.

And I'm OK with that. Here's why:

You can debate all day long until you're blue in the face about whether or not we should have invaded Iraq in the first place. You can accuse the Bush administration of lying to Congress and to the American people about weapons of mass destruction. You can argue about whether or not Saddam Hussein had links to international terrorism. And none of it really matters. We're there.

The question is: What should we do about it?

Let's say we all decide to build a new building. We find a piece of land and dig a big hole for the foundation. Then let's say that later on we find out that somebody lied to us. Let's say we really didn't have a right to build on that property and now we need to leave.

Do we just walk away and leave the big hole in the ground? No, we all know that we are still responsible for filling that hole back in and trying to restore the property to its original condition.

That's the way I see the situation in Iraq. Even if we decide that the invasion was completely unjustified, we can't just walk away from it. We have a moral obligation to clean it up, to fill in the hole we created.

And since not even the Democratic candidates are willing to commit to having our Soldiers out of Iraq by 2012, I'd have to say they all agree with me. No matter how good "bring our troops home from Iraq" sounds as a campaign promise, we can't just walk away from it.

So for at least four more years, we find ourselves in a situation where – regardless of our feelings about the war in Iraq – we will need to continue to show support for the brave young men and young women who are over there, risking their lives.

And at this point, I don't think it's particularly helpful talking about whether or not we should be there. That's water under the bridge. Our energy would be better spent debating the best way to help Iraq become self-sufficient so we can bring our troops back home.

I can tell you from personal experience that when I was over there in Iraq, that news reports about protests about the war and how it was becoming "increasingly unpopular with the American people" – that things like that hurt troop morale and made it harder to serve.

Some well-meaning Hollywood stars started sending autographed pictures to Soldiers in Iraq. One of my Soldiers got a picture from John Heard, who played the father in the "Home Alone" movies. Instead of something like "Thanks for your service," above his autograph he wrote, "Get out of Iraq." I can't tell you how upsetting this was to my Soldiers. They still feel bitter about it.

I think about Specialist Kyle Strunk's words, how he is proud of what he has done while serving his country. That pretty much sums it up. Our Soldiers are doing a great job over there. They can be proud of what they are doing, and we should be proud of them, as well.

Years from now, when we look back on the war in Iraq, I hope we remember it in terms of the greatness of the heart of the American Soldier, and his willingness to sacrifice everything for the good of others.

So to all you Soldiers of B Battery, I salute you. You are my heroes. We love you, we support you, and we pray for your safe return.

Keep up the good fight!

Signing out from Honolulu

Steve Scalf

**** Steve Scalf is a member of the U.S. Military. Reach him at slscalf@msn.com.**

GUEST
Continued from Page 4

studies indicate we've got some serious distance to travel.

More than 8 million American children, grades 4-12, struggle to read, write and comprehend on the most basic levels, according to federal studies, and only three out of 10 eighth-graders are reading at or above grade level, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Society as a whole pays, according to the National Governors Association, whose "Reading to Achieve" report indicates that deficits in basic literacy skills drain as much as $16 million annually from businesses, universities and under-educated workers themselves in lost productivity and other costs.

Libraries are part of the solution. According to a recent study by the University of Kentucky Survey Research Center, nine out of 10 people saw libraries as a "key educational asset in the community" and agreed that libraries help people learn new things.

Research in 14 states has found that students with well-developed school libraries consistently score 10-18 percent higher on reading and other tests. Librarians help students conduct research, either in person or online through "ask-a-librarian" services. In fact, they answer almost 73 million reference questions each year – about twice the attendance at college football games.

Libraries and librarians are more relevant than ever, providing a 24/7 information delivery service. Our multi-faceted, multicultural, multilingual resources are providing a path to their best conceivable future for millions nationwide. And, of course, admission is free.

It's democracy in action. There's nothing obsolete about that.

Make time for yourself

Touch of Health Massage Center would like to welcome Christal Metcalfe, as a massage therapist.
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- Use a mouthguard if you play contact sports
- Floss every day
- See your dentist regularly

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