

Thoughts from the State Librarian

by Christie Brandau, State Librarian

April 1, 2008

You should see the changes that we have been making at the State Library of Kansas!



- We grew tired of struggling with an OPAC that gives us fits and starts, and have thrown it out. This was a very satisfying endeavor and truly great fun. Now if you want a book from SLK, just go to Google Books and request it.
- We redesigned the collection to be accessible by color and size of the book. We just couldn't think of good reasons to keep the books in the order they were in, and it makes it much easier to fill patron requests for the "thin blue book."
- The weeding project within the Kansas State Documents Collection will begin in May after legislative session. It is hoped that, when the dust clears, approximately 95% of the collection will be disposed of leaving room for the Sports Bar planned for the area after renovation.
- Speaking of the renovation, word has been received that the State Library staff and collections will be moved into the Barnes and Noble Book Store during renovation of the 3rd floor room in the Capitol. Reference staff will be trained in retail promotion and the entire Dewey and Federal Documents Collections will be added to the B & N inventory. Any money raised from that effort will be used to digitize the newspaper clippings collection and give raises to the staff.
- We've added the following requirement for leaving a message on the Legislative Hotline: "Before leaving your message, we ask that you pause a moment and consider whether it is really necessary for you to weigh in on the issue."
- We're in the process of carpeting over the glass floor. Too many people were gazing up and chanting "I see London, I see France...."
- Books are quickly being replaced by electronic resources, so we are changing the name of the Center of the Book to the Center of the Universe. The new name also more closely matches our attitude.
- We've dropped our efforts at Second Life and have decided to focus more on "Getta Life." We also decided to discontinue Audio Books, Music and More and instead will post directions on our website to the nearest Cracker Barrel.
- Because of the confusion caused by so many of our programs and projects having names that begin with K or Kan or Kansas, we are renaming *Kansas Reads to Preschoolers* and now calling it *Nebraska Reads to Preschoolers*. We are also renaming *KanGuard* and calling it *Can'tSee*.
- The 2008 Kansas Legislature approved all the budget enhancements requested by SLK and commended us for our initiative and tenacity! (**Now you KNOW this column is an April 1 joke!**).

REAL Thoughts from the State Librarian

“The era of the library OPAC is over.”

Bradford Lee Eden

University of California, Santa Barbara

The era of the library OPAC over? That’s a pretty hard concept to grasp for many of us who have been involved in some way, shape or form with online library catalogs for years! How can it be that offering organized and cataloged information online via the Marc record could become obsolete?

For my entire career I’ve preached the gospel of MARC records, but now I’m reading articles and blogs that question their future. Christopher Harris writes in the January issue of School Library Journal that “OPACs, no matter the generation, are about delivering MARC records to users—who aren't looking for MARC records.”



We are on our way to becoming a society that accesses information in random, mashed up methods using identification tools that could transcend the need for cataloging. Finding online information today is as easy as typing a key word into a search box. And library materials could be organized using multiple tags and mapping strategies. With these possibilities, there are bound to be questions about why we take the time, effort and talent to catalog a library item when a bar code could identify exactly where to find it in the library. And then the next question will be whether there is really a need for all of the 400’s to sit on a shelf together!!

I’m sure we’re not at the point of throwing out our OPACs, but the concept is being discussed in library circles around the country. As always, we need to constantly reevaluate what we do in order to ensure that we are not holding onto ideas and processes that are no longer necessary. And if we look at this through the lens of a 2.0 librarian, we will not just be looking for new ideas, but also for the best tools to enable library users to access our resources.

Best,

Christi Branden

