
Volume 24
Number 1 *The Specialness of Special Libraries*

7-25-2018

Volume 24 Issue 1 Introduction

Sue Ludington
Lane County Law Library

Recommended Citation

Ludington, S. (2018). Volume 24 Issue 1 Introduction. *OLA Quarterly*, 24(1), 3-5. <https://doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1926>

© 2018 by the author(s).

OLA Quarterly is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

From the Guest Editor



SUE LUDINGTON

Since March 2018, Sue has been the Law Librarian for the Lane County Law Library; prior to that, she was the Assistant Law Librarian at Washington County (OR) Law Library for over five years. She earned her MLIS from the University of Washington in 2002 and worked for 10 years in public libraries as a teen services librarian. Upon receiving her Paralegal Studies certificate in 2012, Sue transitioned into the world of public law librarianship and has found great satisfaction in serving the patrons of these special libraries. When not librarianing, she enjoys hiking, crossword puzzles, beer, local politics, and live music.

A great library contains the diary of the human race.

—George Mercer Dawson

When I entered graduate school at the University of Washington (UW) in 2000, I knew I wanted to be a public librarian. However, with an undergraduate minor in art and a pervasive interest in museums, I remained secretly fascinated by special libraries. I mean, how cool would it be to work at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library & Archives (<http://library.rockhall.com/home>) or the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (<http://www.oscars.org/library>)?

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, “(s)pecial librarians work in settings other than school or public libraries . . . Law firms, hospitals, businesses, museums, government agencies, and many other groups have their own libraries that use special librarians” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, para. 10). According to the American Library Association, there are approximately 6,966 special libraries or information centers (“special libraries include Corporate, Medical, Law, Religious, etc.”) in the United States (American Library Association, 2015, para. 5).

Though I haven’t made it to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, I’ve enjoyed encounters with a wide range of special libraries over the years. During my time in Seattle, I volunteered at the Mountaineers library (no longer in existence): as an avid hiker and climber, I was tremendously excited to engage with this collection. I will never forget the thrill of seeing a checkout card signed by mountaineering writer Jon Krakauer!

I also took part in special library tours organized by UW’s student chapter of the Special Libraries Association (<https://www.sla.org/>). My memory is hazy on the different places we visited, but the most unforgettable for me was Experience Music Project (now called the Museum of Pop Culture www.mopop.org): here we heard about the acquisition process of music-related artifacts, saw how they cataloged various realia—defined as “actual objects (artifacts, specimens, etc.)”—and learned about necessary storage methods (Taylor, 2006, p. 542). From costumes to instruments to archived recordings to sheet music, it was a riveting inside look at how a massive museum maintains and preserves its unique collection.

After I left Seattle, I spent the next 10 years mostly working in Oregon public libraries, loving nearly every minute of it. But, like many, I always watched the job postings because you never know, right?

At one point, I applied for a job at the American Alpine Club Library in Golden, Colorado (<https://americanalpineclub.org/library/>), but it didn't pay very well. I also seriously considered throwing my hat in the ring for the new (in 2009) Grateful Dead Archivist position at the University of California at Santa Cruz for the Library Special Collections & Archives' Grateful Dead Archive (<https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/gratefuldeadarchive>). Alas, I lacked any real experience as an actual archivist, so was clearly out of the running. Still, fun to dream!

Fast forward 10 years and, as is wont to happen, a serendipitous turn of events changed the course of my career. By 2013, I had earned my Paralegal Studies certificate and been promoted to Assistant Law Librarian at the Washington County Law Library in Hillsboro, Oregon (<https://www.co.washington.or.us/lawlibrary/>). Five years later and I'm now in Eugene, having recently been hired as Law Librarian for the Lane County Law Library (www.lanecounty.org/lawlibrary). County law libraries have many similarities to public libraries, but the hallmarks of special librarianship—working with a smaller, specialized collection, serving a limited patron group, and placing emphasis on meeting these particular users' needs—figure most prominently.

So, when given the opportunity to serve as *OLA Quarterly* guest editor, I jumped at the chance to investigate and highlight the specialness of some of Oregon's special libraries. And, boy, do we have some good ones!

We open the issue with a fabulously in-depth look at the Mazama Library and Historical Collections (LHC), written by LHC Manager Mathew Brock. The Mazamas, a Portland-based climbing organization in existence for nearly 125 years, reveres its library, which is one of the few remaining standalone mountaineering libraries in the United States. Accompanied by terrific photographs, Mathew's account talks about Mazama Library history and elaborates on the LHC's incredible collection of print books, maps, and realia.

Next, Katie Lockwood, Metadata & Systems Librarian at University of Western States in Portland, shares how her library adapted the National Library of Medicine (NLM) Classification scheme in order to better serve her institution's chiropractic students. Inspired by the limited classification of "chiropractic therapeutics," Katie demonstrates how the reclassification effort resulted in increased awareness and usage of the affected materials.

Another special library in Portland is the one affiliated with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). Supervisory Librarian Kaye Silver outlines the history of the BPA Library and its changing role within the organization, then showcases her efforts to revamp the BPA Library and Visitor Center. Before and after photos bring her narrative to life!

Illustrating the similarities that special libraries have with other types of libraries, Rachael Davis, Library Technician 3 at Oregon State University's Guin Library (located at the Hatfield Marine Science Center campus in Newport), offers a look at the method she created as a way to preserve the institutional memory of a retiring colleague. Rachael's innovative strategy lends encouragement to others who might want to try using "oral history" projects for this purpose.

Following this account is a superb overview of the Jackson County Genealogical Library (JCGL) written by Cara Davis-Jacobson and Anne Billeter, both with the Rogue Valley Genealogical Society in Medford. The writers present a detailed look at JCGL's evolution and tempt readers with its boast-worthy collection, vast services, and public education opportunities well-known in Southern Oregon and beyond.



As a companion piece, Dawn Carlile, Library Coordinator at the Oregon Genealogical Society (OGS) in Eugene, offers wonderful insights into Oregon genealogical societies as a whole. From one-of-a-kind collections to diverse classes and stimulating seminars, Oregon's 30+ genealogical societies are undeniably critical links to preserve the history of Oregon's families.

From the world of medicine, Heather Martin, Director of System Library Services at Providence St. Joseph Health, details the fascinating instructional role that hospital librarians fulfill as part of that institution's medical residency programs. By actively engaging with hospital residents during their course of work and study, these expert librarians instill skills that will endure beyond the residency period.

We conclude our look at special libraries with a timely treat: Matthew Cowan, Moving Images & Photography Archivist at the Oregon Historical Society (OHS), shares the amazing tale about a collection of 1980s videotapes that went unseen for decades—until OHS let a couple of film directors know about them. You won't want to miss reading about OHS' role in *Wild Wild Country*, the 2018 Netflix documentary about the Rajneesh movement in Oregon.

I welcome you into the world of special libraries and sincerely hope you enjoy reading about all the absolute "specialness" they have to offer!

References

American Library Association (2015, September). *ALA library fact sheet 1*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet01>

Taylor, A. (2006) *Introduction to cataloging and classification*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018). Librarians. *Occupational outlook handbook, 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/librarians.htm>

—Sue Ludington
OLAQ Guest Editor
 Law Librarian
 Lane County Law Library
sue.ludington@co.lane.or.us

