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Front Cover: A full moon and firefall at Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley. Digital scan made from a 2 1/4 x 2 1/4 color negative by Earl Payne. See article by Burt Thompson, pages 8-15.

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California State Library Foundation

1225 8th Street, Suite 345, Sacramento, CA 95814

tel: 916.447.6331 | web: www.csldn.org | email: info@csldn.org



Away from the demands of the Library Development Services Bureau, Wendy Hopkins is photographed in the calm of the State Library's rare book room.

{ Public Libraries | Are Unsung Heroes

A Conversation with Library Development Services Bureau Chief Wendy Hopkins

By M. Patricia Morris

The California State Library has a connection to virtually every public library in the state through the programs of its Library Development Services Bureau. On August 12, 2017, I met with Bureau Chief Wendy Hopkins in her office at the Library to talk about the bureau's recent activities. During an hour-long interview, she shared many stories that spoke to the creativity and innovation taking place both at the State Library and in the field aimed at improving public library services.

State Librarian Greg Lucas chose Wendy Hopkins two and one-half years ago to head the bureau. Her background is not in librarianship, but in media and communications. In the 1990s, she served as Governor Pete Wilson's media relations director. Then for many years she ran the California State Legislature's broadcast services. Fol-

Hopkins likened her role to that of an orchestra conductor of an incredibly talented team.

lowing that she worked for a variety of organizations including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) before being hired at the California Department of Public Health, where she was responsible for the department's communications relating to high risk situations such as earthquakes and pandemics.

During the course of our conversation, Hopkins likened her role to that of an "orchestra conductor of an incredibly talented team."

When the bureau is at full strength, as chief, Hopkins heads a staff of twelve.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Patricia Morris is the Foundation's copy editor. In addition, she has contributed several superb articles to the Bulletin. Morris is active in two Toastmasters Clubs, the Capital Communicators and Capitol Captivators. This year Morris received the Distinguished Toastmaster award.

The creativity in these libraries is astonishing," she said. "I think public libraries are unsung heroes of communities. I think people would be truly shocked to walk into a library and find out how vibrant it is. How much there is to offer. It is not just books, just audio, just CDs."

During the downturn, the bureau lost half its staff requiring the remaining members to cover the same workload.

She said, the principal work of the team is to "oversee, administer, and monitor approximately \$10 million dollars in federal and state grants." "What we do," she added, "is create grant programs that go out to public libraries, so they can create programs that are beneficial to their community, things like teen programs and summer reading programs."

The largest source of library funding administered by the Library Development Services Bureau comes from the federal government through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the federal agency responsible for distributing LSTA grant and operational funds to the fifty states.

How do libraries compete for these grants? Hopkins said, "There are several different ways, because we have different levels of grant programs." She proceeded to describe how one State Library LSTA program came into being.

STATE LIBRARY'S MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

"Over a year ago," she said, "we saw the mental health crisis escalating when there was the San Bernardino shooting. The poor people of San Bernardino were so affected. A lot of people raced to the library because they wanted resources to find out how to get help, how to get mental health help, what to do about gun control. So the point was to provide, first of all, San Bernardino with materials to help the people of San Bernardino, and the local library to help meet those needs. And obviously it can happen anywhere, so we developed it into a statewide program.

"State Librarian Greg Lucas, the E-Team,¹ and a lot of members of my staff felt the need for a grant to be created, a \$1 million grant, to go out for mental health resources for public libraries. For mental

health, we felt it beneficial to train librarians on how to deal effectively and compassionately with any patron suffering with mental illness, so that not only would the librarian staff feel safe and secure in their work environment but other patrons in the library won't be disturbed by, or fearful of, individuals affected by mental illness.

"We teamed up with the National Council of Behavioral Health, and they provided five-day training classes for thirty people each. Each of these thirty people, by taking that training, had to agree to conduct three eight-hour classes of their own. Approximately 600 librarians and community partners, like police and fire and other agencies that encounter people affected by mental health, have been trained.

"There is one component where we are creating a series of eight videos of the different things that librarians can do for people with mental health issues. Like when someone becomes violent or aggressive, or how to deal with teens with mental health issues and that type of thing. Of course any library in the nation can bring these videos up on YouTube and benefit from the information that we are sharing. So that is just one example of the type of grants that we can do," Hopkins said.

The creation of the Mental Health Initiative was so compelling, I was curious about other LSTA grants the bureau had worked on. "The list is so long," Hopkins said. But she accommodated me by describing the Career Online High School program that had its start as a pilot program.

GETTING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AT YOUR LIBRARY

"In Career Online High School," Hopkins said, "anybody of any age can work with the libraries that have this program and get their diploma. It is not a GED. It is an actual high school diploma. You can pick up at whatever point you are at.

"Say a young person who is three quarters away from a high school diploma had to drop out in their junior year for whatever

reason. They had to support their family, or had to go to work. They can come back and pick up where they left off and complete their credits and complete their high school diploma, which gives them a better position in the community to get a better job and hopefully to go on and get a better education and become a better contributing member of society.”

I asked about the State Legislature’s involvement. “The Legislature is incredibly enthused about this program,” she said. Hopkins went on to explain that “this program is supported by a combination of state and federal funds along with matching funds from participating libraries.”

IN PRAISE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

In mid-interview Hopkins paused from reporting on specific LSTA programs to laud the innovation coming from California’s public libraries. “I want to emphasize this,” she said. “We work very closely and have a great partnerships with the public libraries. They look to us for advice. They look to us for training, but also to create new ideas, so we can keep libraries alive and vital in today’s society. We want to hear from them. What is going on in your world? What needs do you have so that we can answer and meet those needs?”

“The creativity in these libraries is astonishing,” she said. “I think public libraries are unsung heroes of communities. I think people would be truly shocked to walk into a library and find out how vibrant it is. How much there is to offer. It is not just books, just audio, just CDs.”

She described three programs in public libraries specifically designed for kids. Teen advisory groups were the first. “There are teen advisory groups,” she said, “that act as peers and mentors to other teens that work on the issues that affect teens today like bullying, social media, and parent issues.”

The second type of creative public library program she mentioned was summer reading. “Some summer reading programs,”

she said, “help stop the summer slide when kids get out of school. They stop and have a fun summer and they lose so much of what they learned in the school year, so they sort of have to start over again to a degree in the next school year. So the summer reading programs are designed to stop that summer slide so that kids stay engaged and active and still retain and use what they learned in the school year so they are prepared to go into the next school year.”

The third program explores a new technology. “Public libraries,” she said, “have these things called ‘maker spaces’ through one of the grants we have provided for 3D printers so the kids can learn about science and technology and math. Sure they can go and create something fun in the maker spaces. They don’t even know that they are learning these core fundamentals. They are having an absolutely great time.”

“The incredibly great work that libraries are doing and anchoring the community is a wonderful thing to see. It is a wonderful thing to be a part of,” she said.

PITCH AN IDEA PROPOSALS

LSTA grants are awarded in a variety of ways. Some are statewide programs that the State Library itself created. Others are projects resulting from ideas submitted by public libraries and which are evaluated on a competitive basis. The Pitch An Idea Proposals, though, are Hopkins’s favorite type. About a million dollars a year is allotted for these grants awarded at a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$100,000.

This is what they tell the libraries she said, “You come up with your best idea for a program that would benefit your community and you fill out an application, and then we will do a phone call, and you give a ten minute sales pitch on why this is such a great program and why we should do it. A ten minute pitch and then Q and A. Some of the most amazing ideas come out of these Pitch An Idea proposals.” She told me about one of them.

NAPA’S BIKE BRANCH

To extend outreach to their communities, a number of libraries in California are turning to bike bookmobiles. Hopkins told how Napa Public Library succeeded this year in getting a Pitch An Idea grant to buy a motorized bike to enable its staff to attend more community events.

“The bike is basically a three-wheeler that is partially electric,” she said, “so any staff member of any size or physical ability could use it without overexerting or hurting themselves. On the back is a really appealing little cab.”

The bike is currently being custom built. The plan is that when they go to the farmer’s market on the bike, they will carry various materials on gardening and things like that in the cab. Later on in the day, when someone else is going to take the Bike Branch to a concert in the park, they will switch out the boxes and put in music and art related information. Back at home, the Napa Bike Branch will be parked in front of the library, so when people see it in front of the library, they will recognize it in the field and gravitate toward it.

“What a brilliant strategy,” Hopkins enthused. “It brings the library materials to the public reminding them that they have a fantastic library right in their community.”

INNOVATION STATIONS

Hopkins had been talking about a smaller library. “But the huge libraries do phenomenal things too,” she said. She proceeded to explain how Chula Vista Public Library partnered two years ago with Qualcomm, the multinational semiconductor and telecommunications company, to install a Thinkabit Lab™ at the library. Since Qualcomm copyrighted the name, they are called “Innovation Stations.”

“It was Qualcomm’s idea,” she said. “Chula Vista Library Director Betty Waznis had a storage area about as dreary and gloomy a place as you could possibly want.” Qualcomm said, “Tell you what.