

# CONNECTICUT LIBRARIES

A Publication of  
the Connecticut  
Library  
Association

## CT's First Certified Electronic Librarian

An Interview with  
Norman D. Stevens

When I learned that Robert U. Rossum, Connecticut's first certified electronic librarian (CEL), had taken up residence and independent practice in Storrs, I asked Norman D. Stevens, director emeritus of The University of Connecticut Libraries, and director of The Molesworth Institute, to interview him for Connecticut Libraries.

David Kapp, Editor



Norman D. Stevens  
Photo: S. Zack

**NDS** Welcome to Storrs. Please tell us about your background.

**RUR** I was born in Seattle, where my mother is a hardware design engineer for Intel and my father a software design engineer for Microsoft. I was home-schooled and later spent a good bit of time with some of my parents' colleagues in Silicon Valley. I was one of six members of the first CEL class at an advanced electronic think tank in Pasadena that is affiliated with UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. When The Molesworth Institute invited me to attend one of its famous project design

The Pitney Bowes Literacy and Education Fund donated \$49,000 to Stamford's Ferguson Library so that the main library can open at 9 a.m. instead of 10 a.m., Monday – Saturday. The new hours went into effect on October 2. (From left to right) Stamford Mayor Daniel Malloy; Harry Romanowitz, former chair, Ferguson Library Board of Trustees; Juanita James, chief communications officer, Pitney Bowes; Ernest A. DiMattia, Jr., president, Ferguson Library



seminars last April, I fell in love with the Storrs area and decided to set up an independent practice in the Gurleyville section of Mansfield.

**NDS** How do you define an independent practice and just what is it that you do?

**RUR** I am a self-employed CEL who provides total information services to individuals, companies, and other organizations anywhere in the world. By choice, most of my clients are in the Quiet Corner of Connecticut because, strange as it may seem, I prefer face-to-face contact, rather than electronic communication.

**NDS** What, exactly, is "total information services"?

**RUR** Through my computer and other communication systems, I have instantaneous access from wherever I may be to every known information service, both electronic and non-electronic.

**NDS** How do you find clients? Give us an example of the services you provide for them.

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# OBVERSION Girl Scout Camp Was Never Like This

I hadn't been to camp since I was a Girl Scout. Back then, I sold Girl Scout cookies in the main corridor of my small Rhode Island high school to help pay for the costs. I lasted from age 7 to 16, my final reward being named camp bugler—a talent I resurrected many years later when the summer reading theme at the Lucy Robbins Welles Library in Newington was "Camp Read A-Lot!"

But Library Camp East was different—no mosquito netting, no reveille, no sit-upons. In fact, no rules. It was sponsored by Darien Public Library and it drew people from all over the East and as far west as Michigan. It was termed an "unconference" where there were no rules except that whoever comes is the right participant, whatever happens is supposed to happen, and there is no expectation other than to be yourself.

There was a brief agenda just to get us in gear. As we went around the room introducing ourselves, I began to hear new words and terms—mash-ups, API, Meebo, and COINS (Context Objects in Spans). It was a little odd to be one of the most veteran participants in terms of years in the profession but to know the least. I told myself it was good for me. (A few weeks earlier I would have used the spinach analogy.)



Maxine Bleiweis

Then common themes began to emerge: bemoaning the emphasis librarians place on searching, ignoring the desire of the patron to find answers quickly; the desire for open URLs to make all our information searchable in Google-type search engines. One participant cited the example of typing "Baby Sister for Frances" into Google and finding the only reference to a library from a blog response with a link made by a non-librarian. Wait a minute—don't we all own that famous book? Why are the hits for Amazon and Barnes & Noble?

Some people argued that people don't want too many choices, and that's what you'd get if you had federated searching of multiple databases. But, countered another, we're faced with lots of choices every day in the grocery store and at the ice cream shop. People need to learn how to sort those choices. Such as putting all the ice cream flavors with nuts in one section, and the fruit-based ice cream in another, and the sorbets in another. You get the picture. We need to build a recommendation system. After all, who knows better than librarians how to help people differentiate good information from bad?

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## BOOKS LOOKING AT

### American Education

by Joel Spring (12<sup>th</sup> edition, McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2006)

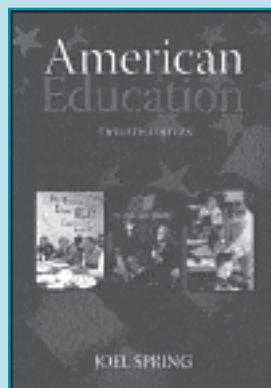
Two years ago, as a contributor to this column I wrote: "Librarians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are seeing the role they need to play and the responsibilities they have within their organizations expand at an amazing rate."

As I wrote this book review, that assertion seemed truer than ever. If you agree that our role as librarians is ever changing and you believe that our role in the education of society is essential, you will appreciate *American Education*. Joel Spring's book offers insights into our society and the people librarians reach out to everyday. It provides us, as "educators of society," with current data on the political, cultural, and economic environments in which we work.

In 323 well organized and clearly written pages, Spring presents many graphs, tables, charts, and other visuals to illustrate the points made in his text. Each chapter includes a list of works cited in that chapter along with suggested readings. The twelfth edition offers a link to McGraw Hill Online Resources where one can find chapter reviews, comprehension questions, and exercises ([www.mhhe.com/springae12a](http://www.mhhe.com/springae12a)).

The two major strengths of this book are its visual components and the current research and data it provides. The graphs, charts, diagrams, professional cartoons, and census tables, both in the book and online, offer invaluable and powerful illustrations of the author's discussion. Revised every two years, the updated graphs and census data provide a global perspective on the educational environment in the United States (though the frequent updates are a downside for those on limited budgets).

The text offers helpful resources for teachers, librarians, school library media specialists, and other professionals who work with reading and reading comprehension. Spring handles



the issues, whether politically driven education goals or specific program requirements, such as those of the No Child Left Behind Act, in an open-minded manner.

*American Education* is divided into two sections: "School and Society" and "Power and Control in American Education." The "School and Society" chapters cover many issues relevant to us as teachers and librarians who interact with people of different races, genders, and socioeconomic classes. Spring discusses, in great depth, the concept of equal opportunity, focusing

specifically on "equal educational opportunity." Both school and public libraries have an important role to play in achieving the goals of equal educational opportunity by providing access to resources without regard to individual or group differences. The chapter dealing with multicultural education provides a clear and persuasive explanation of why different resources, in different formats, and at different stages of development, are required in the educational process.

The "Power and Control in American Education" chapters focus on educational testing; curriculum; instruction as it relates to censorship, web use, e-learning; and legislation that complements, and sometimes contradicts, the concept of freedom of access to information. A section of the book devoted to court cases reveals the struggles within our society when it comes to providing access and information and creating a society of life-long learners.

Spring handles the issues surrounding the No Child Left Behind Act well, providing resources to better understand the implications of this act on the nation's educational structure, as well as how it plays out at the local level. Clearly, the goal of

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Tara L. Hurt  
Guest Book  
Reviewer

## LOOKING AT BOOKS

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educating students to read well has major implications for creating an informed society and has a direct impact on libraries. As library professionals, we need to know as much as we can about this significant act.

Spring states, "While actual classroom procedures have varied little since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there continues to be a struggle over the content of textbooks, state standards, the goals of the curriculum and access to the Internet."

Whether we are classroom teachers, school library media specialists, or librarians, our users are coming to expect a multi-faceted, multi-cultural approach to learning. We must continue to provide open access and equal educational opportunity for all those who walk through our doors or visit our web pages.

*Tara L. Hurt is university archivist, head of archives & special collections, and an associate reference librarian at Eastern Connecticut State University.*



*Josephine Fulcher Anderson, supervisor of the Ferguson Library's South End Branch for 19 years, has been selected by the First Baptist Church of Greenwich as one of three Fairfield County women*

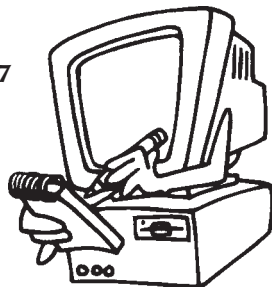
*to receive the church's 2006 Distinguished Service Award. The award acknowledges the unique accomplishments of outstanding women in the areas of service to community, business and faith. It also aspires to encourage excellence in young women by providing role models of women of integrity, dedication and faith, and to create a legacy of leadership for women in Fairfield County.*

*"I look forward to coming to work everyday," Ms. Fulcher Anderson says. "My work has given me opportunities to share, teach, learn and grow, and I very much enjoy working with our diverse community here in Stamford. My work is a special blessing. Getting paid and honored to do what I love is a double blessing."*

**Connecticut Libraries** solicits articles, news, opinions, and photographs about matters of interest to the state's library community. Send contributions to:

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**Bolton, CT 06043**

*Deadline: Second Friday of the month.*



*Barbara Bailey*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### CLA Partnerships

**We're havin' a party . . . a Connecticut Book Party!** CLA, Friends of Connecticut Libraries, the Connecticut Library Consortium, and the Connecticut State Library are partnering to sponsor a statewide book party to benefit Gulf Coast libraries that were ravaged by hurricane Katrina.

The Connecticut Book Party—a gigantic book sale tentatively scheduled for April 2007—will take place in the central part of the state (exact site still to be established). Sites where book donations can be dropped off will be established in convenient places all around the state. The steering committee, at work since late September, also plans to schedule Connecticut authors reading from their works as well as musical performances during the party.

Henry Dutcher, director of the Enfield Public Library is the mastermind behind the party, and if anyone can pull it off a project of this magnitude, he can. *But*, not without help from all of us. A major PR firm is interested in helping with the publicity, and we have a coordinator for the music program, but there is still much more to be done. If you would like to help, please contact Henry at [hdutcher@enfield.org](mailto:hdutcher@enfield.org) and volunteer.

**Partnering in Support of Libraries & Literacy** CLA lends its name and financial support to a variety of organizations and activities, co-sponsoring worthwhile library and literacy programs throughout the year. Last year CLA co-sponsored the "Love Your Library" program at Barnes & Noble. This event raised over \$7,000 to help fund the Historical *Hartford Courant* database that is now available to libraries and residents of Connecticut via iCONN. This fall CLA, working with CLC and the State Library, is promoting a second "Love Your Library" weekend at Barnes & Noble bookstores across the state, from Friday, December 1 through Sunday, December 3. Further details will be forthcoming. Proceeds will benefit InfoAnyTime.

The Connecticut Educational Media Association and CLA co-sponsor the Nutmeg Children's Book Award ([nutmegaward.org](http://nutmegaward.org)). This outstanding program encourages children in grades 4-6 to read quality literature and then vote for their favorite title from the list of ten nominees. The author of the winning title receives the Nutmeg Book Award.

CLA is also an enthusiastic sponsor of the Connecticut Children's Book Fair ([bookfair.uconn.edu](http://bookfair.uconn.edu)), held annually on UConn's Storrs campus. Each year, this fair brings 15 - 20 prominent children's book authors and illustrators to campus to promote children's literature and to meet the children and caregivers who are their audience. This year's fair, the fifteenth, will be held November 11-12, presented by the UConn Co-Op and the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, which houses the Northeast Children's Literature Collection.

For the first time this holiday season, CLA will co-sponsor Lt. Governor Kevin Sullivan's "Season's Readings" book drive. The goal of this project is to collect 6,000 new books to be distributed to Connecticut kids ages three through 17 and to raise awareness of the literacy challenge faced by this age group. Books will be collected from November 28 through December 15. Several libraries in the Greater Hartford area will serve as drop-off points and a number of area librarians will participate in the kick-off rally.

**Promoting Information Freedom and Library Leadership & Legislation** In support of information freedom and the protection of patron privacy, CLA lent its support as one of many sponsors to the "Take Back Our Rights" conference, held on October 7 at Quinnipiac University School of Law. The "John Doe" librarians participated in the workshop, "CT Librarians vs. FBI & Patriot Act; NSA Wiretapping; Civilian Surveillance."

At the national level, CLA has contributed \$500 toward ALA President Leslie Burger's "Emerging Leaders Initiative." The goal of this program is to train 100 new library leaders. The program will be launched with an all day workshop in January 2007 at ALA Midwinter in Seattle and will culminate at the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. in June 2007.

CLA also participates, along with other state library organizations, in ALA's "Legislative Day" in Washington, D.C., organized by the ALA Washington Office each May. There, the leaders of Connecticut's library community meet with members of the state's congressional delegation, or their aides, to lobby for federal legislation of concern to libraries and librarians.

Contact Barbara at [bailey@glasct.org](mailto:bailey@glasct.org) or 860-652-7717.

# HIGHLIGHTS

**President** Barbara Bailey received a letter from Lt. Governor Kevin Sullivan requesting that CLA be a co-sponsor of the third annual "Season's Reading" book drive, which provides new books to kids ages 3-17. No financial donation is involved. Board approved a motion to participate. The Barnes and Noble "Love Your Library" promotion will take place once again this year with proceeds to benefit InfoAnytime.

**CLC** Mary Etter reported that CLC is gathering comments and feedback on InfoAnytime for use when seeking additional funding.

**CEMA** Gayle Bogel reported that CEMA is supporting the Nutmeg Award program with a \$1,000 contribution. Last year, 29,000 children voted for the award. Their November 5 pre-conference will feature 35 Connecticut authors and is open to all Connecticut librarians.

**Children** Jane Ash reported on the success of the September 18 Joint Children's Roundtable event, which had 58 attendees and made a profit of \$910 for CLA. She moved that \$250 from the event's profits be donated to the Nutmeg Award. Motion approved.

**Conference** Karen Ronald informed the board that the Conference Committee has written an "Update" on the status of the labor dispute at the Connecticut Convention Center and its possible impact on the 2007 CLA Conference. The document will be published in *CL*.

**CSL** Sharon Brettschneider distributed a report that included information on: Geo Locator, which helps Connecticut residents gain access to iCONN even if they don't have a library card with them; Equal Access Libraries, a training program to assist in the creation of partnerships with community organizations for the purpose of addressing local needs; the Digitization Conference, scheduled for November 14 at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford; and an in-depth evaluation of iCONN that is underway with focus groups and an on-line survey.

**Editorial** Carol Abatelli apologized for the CLA website, which has not been updated because the webmaster has been experiencing medical problems. It was suggested that issues regarding this matter be brought to the attention of Chris Bradley because the webmaster's contract is handled by CLC.

**Intellectual Freedom** Barbara Bailey reported that the CT Four/John Doe will be present at two upcoming events: "Take Back Our Rights" at Quinnipiac, and "Between the Lines" program, also in New Haven.

**Legislative** Peter Ciparelli reported on the September 20 Library Champions reception at Welles Turner Library to honor legislators who were instrumental in securing increased funding for Connecticut. The committee is looking for co-chairs for the March 21 Legislative Pot Luck Supper.

**Membership** Janet Woycik reported that there are currently 785 members of CLA (85 are institutional members).

**NELA** Mary Etter noted that the NELA Executive Board is seeking input from state association members to determine what NELA can do for them.

**Publicity** Betty Anne Reiter reported that publicity awards will be reinstated this year.

**YA** Katie Bunn reported that the committee is looking for a high school where Patrick Jones can host a book discussion.

**Region 4** Lauren McLaughlin reported personnel changes: Maura Ritz, former assistant director at Fairfield, is now director; Karen Ronald is now assistant director at Fairfield; Trumbull PL is searching for a new director; Betsy McDonough former director of Danbury Library, is now a presidential assistant at WCSU; Mark Hasskarl is the new director of the Danbury Library; Laura McLaughlin has retired as assistant director at Danbury; Karen Bowles, director of Stratford Library Association, is retiring in October and the library is searching for a new director.

**Region 2** Betsy Bray reported that Wethersfield PL is closed for renovation. West Hartford's main library is closed for renovation but the branches are open.

## OBVERSION

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And what about those proprietary databases we're so proud of? Who besides us knows they are lurking within our website? Are we kidding ourselves that they are being used by anyone besides us? We were urged to use Instant Messaging for answering questions. Instead of protesting, "but what if no one is there to answer," treat it like the telephone. Someone had better be there to answer or you lose a customer.

We learned that the new version of Microsoft Outlook might have built-in RSS feeds. Do we have anything for people to aggregate? We learned that websites have already changed their looks to be more blog-like. Do ours already look like yesterday's fashion statement?

Someone suggested making sure we use our new terms and expertise—blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, etc.—at every opportunity. After all, the public will remember who introduced them to it first. Having a scout troop over? Let them contribute to your blog to add to their reading badge. Speaking at the senior center? Introduce them to FLICKR to organize those digital photos. Can young people find your library in MySpace? Regardless of the warnings about social networking, it's there to stay and we'd better be part of it.

I started the day feeling a bit bewildered. Not sure I should be there, even though the guidelines said if I was there, I should be. But by the end of the day, I was energized. I felt like I had experienced an immersion course in a foreign language. It was as if time had rolled back 25 years to when we traded in the old card catalog for the online version. Except we know so much more now, and the public has grown up with us. In some ways they are scampering ahead, and in others we have a chance to introduce them to the new world of Web 2.0.

What did Library Camp motivate me to do? Get a book blog started (check it out at [www.westportlibrary.org](http://www.westportlibrary.org)). Put RSS feeds on many computers, including those at the reference desk. We'll be putting a profile on MySpace and figuring out Meebo for IMing.

It's a new world and I'm ready for another session of camp. Girl Scout cookies anyone?

*Maxine Bleiweis is director of the Westport Public Library. You can reach her at [mbleiweis@westportlibrary.org](mailto:mbleiweis@westportlibrary.org).*



Rep. Denise Merrill (left) and Sen. Judith Freedman (right) were among those "Library Champions"

honored at a recent reception to honor legislators who helped win a \$300,000 increase for Connecticut during the last session of the General Assembly. Others who helped include: Senators Mary Ann Handley, Toni Harp and Andrea Stillman; Rep. Betsy Ritter, and Susan Keane, senior committee administrator for the Appropriations Committee.



# TECHNOLOGY

**Editor's Note** A new team of four authors has signed on to write the TECHNOLOGY column for *Connecticut Libraries* on a rotating basis. By way of an introduction, each team member has written an article for this issue. We hope you will find the articles interesting and informative. *David Kapp*

"Information Overload" is among the great buzzwords of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Too much information, too many magazines, too many newspapers, too many websites, too much *stuff*. The Internet gets a lot of blame (or credit) for this. In addition to our local newspaper, we can also read the *New York Times*, our childhood hometown paper, *The Times* of London, and anything other newspaper that strikes our fancy. As librarians, shouldn't all this access make us giddy, not queasy? After all, when it comes to information overload aren't we the human equivalent of the Internet? How many times have you offered a patron twice as much information as he wanted, only to have him back slowly away from the reference desk, eyes glazed?

Information Overload may be a media fabrication, but patrons and colleagues alike tell me that "it's just impossible to keep up" with new technologies, professional trends and pop culture (where *did* Paris Hilton come from, anyway?). Never fear, the Internet can help! Online tools have become more sophisticated, and the number devoted to helping us sort through news, professional information, to-do lists, and favorite online reading grows every day. What follows is by no means a comprehensive list of online productivity tools, but once you start exploring you'll find some that work for you.

**RSS Aggregators/Readers** You've heard it before, but your technology folks keep beating the RSS drum for a reason: it's a great way to keep up with a lot of websites in one place. Can't find time to check every library blog you want to read? No one can, but an RSS aggregator can check for you and bring the content to you in one spot.

- Bloglines, a perennial favorite, was one of the first online aggregators and is now owned by ask.com. ([www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com))
- NewsGator offers a free online version, as well as an inexpensive plug-in for Outlook and a version for Macs. ([www.newsgator.com](http://www.newsgator.com))

- RSSBandit is a downloadable RSS aggregator for Windows. ([www.rssbandit.org](http://www.rssbandit.org))

As RSS becomes a standard feature of most websites, aggregators are appearing under other names.

- MyYahoo allows users to customize their Yahoo homepage with RSS. ([my.yahoo.com](http://my.yahoo.com))
- Livejournal lets users add RSS feeds as "friends" and displays them with other livejournals on users' friends page. ([www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com))
- Firefox and Thunderbird both have RSS integrated to allow users to read headlines while browsing online or reading email. ([www.mozilla.com](http://www.mozilla.com))

Mac users can use RSS in their mail application, in Safari and in a desktop widget.

**To-Do Tools** How many to-do lists, notes, stickies and reminder emails to yourself do you have? We're nowhere near a paperless society, but our paper does seem to be getting physically smaller. I have a pile of sticky notes on my desk reminding me of things I have to do. I frequently find them stuck to the bottom of my shoes. This is not efficient. Online tools allow to-do lists to come with you without the post-it residue.

- Backpack is an online to-do list, calendar and brainstorming space. It will email you or send you text messages with reminders. ([www.backpackit.com/](http://www.backpackit.com/)) Users can share pages to collaborate on work, or use Backpack's sister site Basecamp for a more robust project collaboration space. ([www.basecamp.com](http://www.basecamp.com))
- Voo2Do is a free project management tool. Like Backpack, it will email you reminders and offers collaboration tools. It's especially good for devotees of *Getting Things Done* and has a colorful and easy interface. ([voo2do.com](http://voo2do.com))
- Ta-da and Bla-bla lists are the simplest of the sites listed here. Ta-da is part of Basecamp, but can be used on its own, and Bla-bla is a rival site that uses Flash to create a "drag and drop" interface. Both are strictly to-do lists that can be shared or kept private. ([www.tadalist.com](http://www.tadalist.com) and [blablalist.com](http://blablalist.com))

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## Managing Information Overload



*Kate Sheehan*

*Too much information, too many magazines, too many newspapers, too many websites, too much stuff.*



## TECHNOLOGY

*Library Elf is an Internet service that will e-mail and/or send RSS alerts to patrons about overdue materials and will notify them when items they've placed on hold are ready for their use.*

### Library Elves

by Sylvia Boyd

If you've often wished that your library had elves who would shelf-read, find missing books, and troubleshoot the computers, you are not alone. Although I've never found an elf in the Bridgeport Public Library stacks, there is a virtual Library Elf residing on the web.



Sylvia Boyd

Library Elf is an Internet service that will e-mail and/or send RSS alerts to patrons about overdue materials and will notify them when items they've placed on hold are ready for their use. And the best part of all this: it requires no work by library staff! Patrons take the initiative to sign up for the service by providing their library card number and pin to Library Elf. They decide how often they want notices and reminders and can even get a cell phone text message alert for their holds. They can keep track of multiple library cards so that if a patron is an active Connecticut user all of his library material can be consolidated on one list. Families can enter multiple cards and easily keep track of all the materials they have out. Reminders can be sent up to seven days before items are due.

From a system administrator's perspective, this is the perfect product. All you have to do is send Library Elf the URL for your library catalog and this free service is available to your patrons. The library is not responsible for collecting e-mail addresses and keeping them up-to-date.

A simple link from the library catalog may be all that is needed to publicize the availability of the service to your borrowers. Danbury Public Library uses a link from their catalog to Library Elf, [danburylibrary.org/about/libraryelf.htm](http://danburylibrary.org/about/libraryelf.htm), which includes a privacy notice that makes it clear that Library Elf is a private service not affiliated with the library.

Patron privacy is a major concern in libraries today. Library Elf does not sell, share or distribute e-mail addresses. The company is based in Vancouver, Canada, so the US Patriot Act does not apply. Their privacy policy states that they will not share any information unless ordered by a Canadian court order. Elf does its checking in real-time and does not keep a history of what patrons have had out. However, it is important to note that some public RSS feed aggregators (e.g., Bloglines, Feedster, Rojo, etc)

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### Serving the Public at A University Library

by Bruce Johnston

Smith Library, at Eastern Connecticut State University is a publicly funded library used primarily by students, faculty and staff, and it is our mission to serve them as best we can. However, we also have a small but significant group of patrons who are not affiliated with the university, but who are members of the community seeking an alternative to the local public library. As an institution, we have grappled with the question of how to provide computer access for these patrons in a fair and reasonable manner, without compromising service to the university community.



Bruce Johnston

Providing services to patrons who are not affiliated with the university is not just about providing resources. It raises issues with equipment and network security. It also requires setting service expectations and limits for the public. And finally, there is the matter of patron confidentiality, and offering public patrons a reasonable measure of privacy while still protecting the interests of university patrons, the library and the university itself. While this situation touches on broad issues involving library and university policies, this article discusses how we used technology to implement our policies, and avoids detailed review of our policy making process.

**Providing Computers And Computer Accounts** Providing computer access to patrons requires equipment, a space to work, and a computer account for patrons to use. For our library, providing computers and space was the easy part. We designated the first six computers closest to the reference desk to be available to the public; doing so does not prevent students and faculty members from logging in with their own computer accounts and using these machines as well. However, providing public patrons with a computer account was not as straightforward.

We have a university IT department with whom we needed to cooperate to set up public patron access. The IT department creates user accounts for faculty, staff and students, and normally requires a user to have a university account in order to have computer access.

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# Top 10 Reasons Your Library Should Blog

by Sharon Clapp

**D**o you find yourself wondering *why* — as a librarian — you should care about blogs? If so, this article is for you.

For those who haven't caught the buzz yet, "blogs" (shortened from the term "weblogs") are online journals. They are websites designed to be updated regularly with new entries or "posts." Bloggers create these online journals for a variety of reasons, whether it's to chronicle their lives, provide information on an area of interest to them, or to proffer their opinion on the day's events.

Many libraries are taking advantage of blog technology to open up communication with their patrons, publicize their offerings, and enhance their online presence. A number of Connecticut libraries have already leapt into the blogosphere, and the number continues to grow almost daily.

Darien Library uses blog technology to cover an array of topics, such as books, movies/music, events, and technology. Darien also offers blogs designed specifically for teens and children. ([darienlibrary.org/connections](http://darienlibrary.org/connections)). Case Memorial Library, in Orange, offers the cleverly titled "Jewel Case" blog to highlight new CDs in their collection ([jewelcase.blogspot.com](http://jewelcase.blogspot.com)). Brookfield Public Library's adult summer reading program, "Catch a Great Book," was a centerpiece of the Brookfield Reads blog ([brookfieldreads.blogspot.com](http://brookfieldreads.blogspot.com)). At Cheshire Public Library, a teen blog addresses the interests of their young adults patrons. Earlier this year, four towns — Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill, and Wethersfield — used a blog to support their one book, one region effort ([the-good-wife.blog-city.com](http://the-good-wife.blog-city.com)).

If these examples haven't inspired you, take a look at the top 10 reasons why *all* libraries should consider blogging:

**1) It's So Easy!** Publish information on the web without knowing a tag of html. If you've ever filled out a form on the web, you have the necessary skills to post to a blog. Setup through a blogging site such as [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) or [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) takes just a few minutes.



Sharon Clapp

**2) It's Free.** You don't need your own server or blogging system if you choose one of the free, hosted blogging sites, like those mentioned above. If you want more control over the configuration of your blog or have extra server resources available, you can mount your own blog software. Many packages are open source, cross-platform, and free!

**3) It's Human.** We want to know and trust the people and organizations we deal with. Blogs are usually written in a conversational style. The entries can convey a sense of personal contact that the formalized language of an official website cannot. Blogs can go a long way toward making your library as welcoming online as it is in person.

**4) It's Online.** In a state where 78% of residents are online at least one to five times a week, 61% of them at least once a day (iCONN's Market Survey report, 2005) an online presence is important. Being a part of the blogosphere signals that your library is active in the online world.

**5) It's Creative.** Blogging software is so easy to use that it frees up your blog authors to be more creative. They may record an "audio blog" entry, upload photos, or customize the blog template. An interesting, attractive blog can promote your library more effectively. This is a good excuse to let staff indulge their creative impulses while they develop fluency with blog technology.

**6) It's Visible.** Every blog entry that's created is one more access point allowing users to reach your library. Do you want users of blog search engines like IceRocket ([www.icerocket.com](http://www.icerocket.com)) or Google ([www.google.com/blogsearch](http://www.google.com/blogsearch)) to find no results when they search on your library's name? Put something out there for them. Don't forget that blogging may even increase the ranking of your website on a list of traditional search engine results.

**7) It's A Showcase.** Blog entries can highlight sections of your collection, new acquisitions, and library events. If it's exciting enough, you can create some "buzz" about your library in the blogosphere. Blogging is often seen as the online equivalent of "word-of-mouth" marketing.

**8) It's A Dialogue.** By enabling a blog's "comments" feature, you can allow members of your community to provide feedback to the library and to one another. Feedback can tell you what you're doing right and — on the flip side — can lead to suggestions for improvement. This type of publicly visible feedback may seem dangerous to some, but it offers opportunities



## TECHNOLOGY

*Many libraries are taking advantage of blog technology to open up communication with their patrons, publicize their offerings, and enhance their online presence.*

*Continued on page 10*

## MANAGING INFORMATION OVERLOAD

*Continued from page 5*

- Google Calendar isn't as list-oriented as the other to-do tools, but it will send reminders about events via email or text message. Users can share events, invite guests to an event, share calendars, and integrate public and personal calendars. It's a good bridge between a paper-based datebook and the online world of productivity tools. (calendar.google.com)
- Still, for many people, an online calendar or to do list just isn't the same as a paper-based calendar. Checking boxes with a mouse doesn't provide the same thrill that the satisfying pencil strike-through offers. There's technology for that too.
- The Hipster PDA has a cult following online. It's a stack of color-coded (or monochromatic) index cards held together with a binder clip. A model of efficiency and ease of use. (www.43folders.com/2004/09/03/introducing-the-hipster-pda/)
- Both online and offline tools for managing time, money, information and the ever-growing to-do list are discussed with great passion at LifeHack, an online community devoted to finding shortcuts to making life work better. (www.lifehack.org)

These sites are excellent examples of technology being used as a tool, not for its wow-factor or just for the sake of newness. The Internet has changed how we work and live, and it has most certainly changed the library. "Keeping up" is a daily task and can't be accomplished through the occasional conference or workshop. As fast as our jobs are being changed by technology, tools are being created to make the seemingly Sisyphean task of staying up-to-date manageable. None of this, however, will explain Paris Hilton. ■

*Kate Sheehan is head of technical services at Hamden Public Library.*

## LIBRARY ELVES

*Continued from page 6*

may allow other users of the service to read patrons' RSS feeds, so perhaps e-mail is a better delivery method. At any rate, all of this is spelled out in the Library Elf FAQ.

Currently, the following libraries or consortia in Connecticut are listed on the Library Elf website as providers of this service: Bibliomation, Bridgeport PL, Connecticut State University Library System, Danbury PL, Easton PL, Hamden PL, New Haven Free PL, Rockville PL, Scranton Memorial Library, Simsbury PL, Trumbull PL, UConn Health Center Library, Westport PL, and Wilton Library Association. Elf works with Polaris PowerPac (v.3.2 or later) or Dynix library systems. Other library systems are currently in beta. You can get more information about Library Elf at [www.libraryelf.com](http://www.libraryelf.com). ■

*Sylvia Boyd is head of technical services at the Bridgeport Public Library.*

## SERVING THE PUBLIC AT A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

*Continued from page 6*

Working with campus IT, we created a generic user account on our domain, which gives public patrons access to our coin-operated printers, but which are limited to the six designated public access computers. Since this generic

account can only be used in a space we control, our IT department is willing to allow it. Public patrons who want to use a computer request access at a service desk and then are logged in by library staff with the generic login credentials.

**Limiting Access In An Equitable Manner**  
A major concern that our public computer policy was intended to address was the need to limit access to public computers to a reasonable amount of time, in a non-confrontational manner. We limit public borrowers to a single two-hour session per day. In comparison, our local public library limits public computer usage to a single 30-minute session per day, and other libraries are known to have a one-hour limit on public computer use. Given those facts, we believe a two-hour limit is reasonably generous. It gives public patrons time to do substantive work and appears to ensure adequate availability for everyone during busier periods. Naturally, results may vary at other sites depending upon how many computers are available to deploy for public use and how many public borrowers come to the library.

Some library personnel were not comfortable approaching individuals to limit their session time, so we purchased software from Fortres Grand Corporation that does this automatically. A clear advantage of using a software solution is that there is never a question of whether the limit is being fairly enforced. Also, because we configured the application to enforce the time limit with no exceptions, the likelihood of the policy causing a confrontation is minimized. The software has been stable and reliable and has caused no problems for either the library staff or the public borrowers.

**Conclusion** We have learned that we can provide computer and Internet access to public patrons in a manner that does not compromise or disrupt service to Eastern students and faculty. Doing so successfully has required the library's procedure to be well thought out, and informed by past experience. Our technology tools for this effort were relatively simple. They included creative manipulation of network accounts, and software from an established vendor that met our needs and was easy to learn and implement. In this case, the library feels that the end result is greater than the sum of its parts, providing public patrons with an excellent service, and extending the library's mission. ■

*Bruce Johnston is systems librarian at Eastern Connecticut State University.*

**It was a beautiful fall day when I drove** out to interview Dawn Higginson at the Oxford Public Library. Until that day, I had only seen Dawn at CLA Board meetings or conferences. Seeing her in beautiful Litchfield County, her home, put it all together. Although she grew up in Southbury, Dawn has recently bought her first condo, just 20 minutes away, in Waterbury. Except for a few unopened boxes, she says, her new home is pretty much all re-done, thanks to family and friends.

Dawn is one of the young recruits that we got because she grew up in the public library, specifically in the Southbury Public Library. She started at 15, under the Job Training Partnership Act and was soon promoted to circulation assistant (they knew how to spot a promising newbie!). When she went off to college, she knew what she was going to do. Dawn got her BLS and then her MLS at SCSU, and in 1994 she went back to Southbury with the exalted title of children's circulation assistant. Later, she was promoted to YA librarian, a position she held for five years until 2004 when she came to Oxford for her first full time job, as the children's librarian, serving both children and teens.

Dawn enjoys working with all comers—children, teens, and adults, but she is most enthusiastic about teens. This enthusiasm led her to serve for four years as the co-chair of CLA's YA Section, along with Marie Spratlin Hasskarl, now director at Burlington Public Library. When I asked Dawn how she got involved with CLA, she said that when she got out of library school, she joined CLA to learn more about the profession. She had been YA chair at WCLC before it was merged into CLC three years ago, so it was a natural to chair CLA's YA Section. Dawn was able to visit 42 libraries in four years thanks to CLA, which she calls "a crash course in practical librarianship."

When I asked her to define "young adult" in a library setting, she said that the Oxford Library serves mainly middle school students and some ninth graders, but this could also be a function of Oxford not having its own high school. When asked how she gets kids to read, Dawn says that her book talks at the middle school bring kids in to ask for the books she has talked, and then they trust her to find others. Her favorites among this year's Nutmeg offerings for teens include *Airborne*, a pirate adventure with fantasy elements by Kenneth Oppel. One of her young patrons said of it, "I couldn't believe that you told me to read this really fat book, but I loved it!" For fourth, fifth, and sixth graders, Dawn liked *Half and Half* by Lensey Namioka, the story of a half Scotch, half Asian girl who is torn between the two ethnicities. In addition to fantasy and adventure, Dawn says that teenage boys like graphic novels, magazines about skateboarding and gaming, and superheroes. Girls like Japanese anime and romance. "I'm afraid historical fiction is dead," says Dawn with regret.

Dawn has launched a junior friends of the library group at Oxford, which meets on the second Thursday of every month. Every other meeting is devoted to a project for the library and something fun is planned for the alternate months. The junior friends have had bake sales, decorated the library for holidays,



*Oxford's library may be living in a pretty small space right now, but they are fortunate to have one very big-hearted librarian, Dawn Higginson!*

and staffed a table at Oxford's Dog Days in August. Dawn organizes a summer reading club for both teens and children, with similar themes but with different programming and different prizes. Dawn is also the webmistress at Oxford, and she cheered the day in June 2005 when the library finally joined Bibliomation, which offers high-level tech support for a very small library like Oxford's.

Dawn has gotten most of her inspiration for YA work from author programs. As CLA's YA co-chair, Dawn got to shuttle authors back and forth, getting to know them along the way. She loved Donna Jo Napoli because of the vigorous research she does for her books. Will Hobbs seemed like such a regular person, talking about his

love of gardening and hiking. Tamora Pierce and her husband are both hooked on sci-fi and fantasy. Dawn continues to keep up with favorite authors at her book discussion group for teen and children librarians. Each month they discuss one work of non-fiction, one picture book, one middle grades novel, and one teen novel.

When I asked Dawn the final question, something that is always on our minds—what is the future of the public library—she replied optimistically. She believes that kids especially need help wading through all the information available on the Internet. Without the help of a librarian, they just take the first site that comes up. Dawn also sees value in the readers' advisory service that goes on every day in public libraries. She sees the library as a community center, one of the few places where people of all ages feel comfortable.

Oxford is currently working with consultant Nolan Lushington on a long-range plan so they will be ready when their new library building finally happens. "Whether it is in the shopping center or not, people in town know that we need a new library," says Dawn confidently. Oxford's library may be living in a pretty small space right now, but they are fortunate to have one very big-hearted librarian, Dawn Higginson!

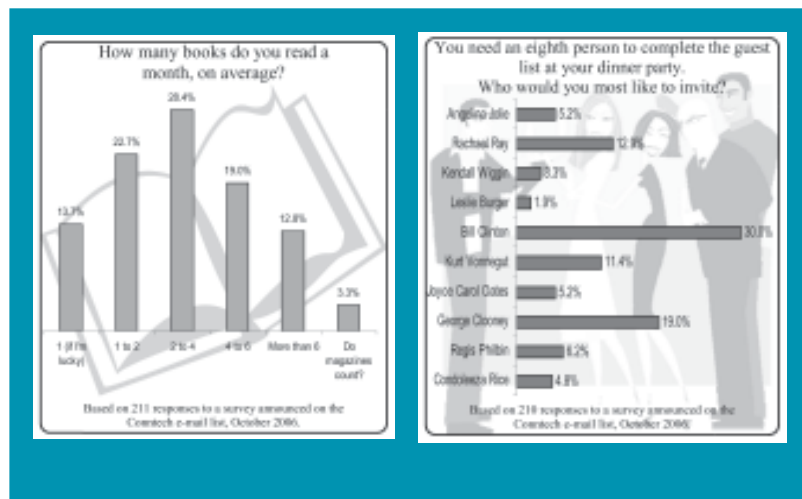
*Chris Bradley is executive director of the Connecticut Library Consortium.*

## SPOTLIGHT

### Dawn Higginson Children's/Teen Librarian, Oxford Public Library



*by Chris Bradley*





## TOP 10 REASONS YOUR LIBRARY SHOULD BLOG

*Continued from page 7*

for libraries that are ready to have an online conversation with their patrons. Most blog software packages offer a comment moderation option, as well.

9) **It's Three Letters.** RSS. Before your eyes glaze over from yet another technology-related acronym, let me explain. RSS (which many authorities say is short for "really simple syndication") is the content of your blog in xml format. Blogs automatically generate an "RSS feed" of the blog's content. You don't really have to understand how it works. All you have to know is that each time you add an entry to your blog, the RSS feed is updated. This feed can be: a) subscribed to through a personalized home page (like the Google or Yahoo home pages) or news reader (such as Bloglines); b) automatically emailed to subscribers through a third-party RSS to email service; or c) automatically incorporated into the body of another webpage (e.g., if you want to create a news and events blog whose contents will automatically show in a given web page).

10) **It's Content Management.** The Ann Arbor District Library, winner of the ALA's best website ([www.aadl.org](http://www.aadl.org)) among libraries with a similar budget, uses a blog to provide new and event-related content for the site. Blogging is so easy that you can get more authors involved in web content creation— without increasing the webmaster's workload. In Ann Arbor's case, the library director is a major contributor to web content, with her own blog. Smaller libraries, in particular, may even decide to use the blog as their primary website. ■

*Sharon Clapp is web resources librarian for the Connecticut State Library.*

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Lucy Gangone received the 2006 Emerson Greenaway Award on Sunday, October 22, during NELA's annual conference in Burlington, Vermont. The award is presented to individuals who have had a demonstrated impact on the library field in New England and is named for Emerson Greenaway, an innovator in library organization and practice in the 1940s and 1950s.

Although currently employed by the Sumter County Library System in Sumterville, Florida, Gangone was selected to receive this prestigious honor based on, as one colleague stated, her "enthusiastic embrace of library services in New England for most of her career." Another library colleague who supported her nomination stated that she "always commits energy, enthusiasm, and encouragement to the project at hand. Coworkers have been able to expect a collegial atmosphere; newcomers, a warm welcome."

Gangone was the champion of the New England Library Leadership Symposium, a unique program within NELA that develops and explores "leadership potential of new librarians, giving them the tools that they need to build on that potential, and at the same time, invigorate each state's library organizations by introducing new leaders on a regular basis." Besides serving as an officer in various state library associations, Gangone also served as NELA's membership chair, treasurer, conference chair, and president. She is a graduate of Connecticut College and of Southern Connecticut State University, with a MS in Library and Information Science. She also holds a Certificate of Librarianship from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

## CT'S FIRST CERTIFIED ELECTRONIC LIBRARIAN

Continued from page 1

**RUR** There are professional restrictions on advertising my services as a CEL, so I build my client base through personal contact with potential users and by word of mouth. One approach I use is to go to local supermarkets and observe the shoppers. When I see someone who seems to be pondering a selection, I ask if I can be of assistance. For example, if they are trying to choose a cereal, once I determine the factors they are considering, (e.g., calories and carbs, oat or wheat, flakes or biscuits, sweetened or not), I can provide information that quickly narrows their choices.


I don't offer medical or legal advice, but I can tell clients if dire side effects have been associated with a particular drug, or if there has been a consumer safety recall on a product. I frequent local bookstores and libraries, where I can offer information service that is instantaneous and more comprehensive than anything their employees can provide, even in a library the size of UConn's, with its millions of books and scores of electronic databases. I get an overwhelmingly positive response from the people I encounter in these situations.

**NDS** *I'm familiar with UConn's resources and the skills of the librarians there, having worked regularly as a volunteer at the Babbidge Library reference desk for more than ten years. So I find it hard to believe that you can do better than they do. Can you prove that your skills are better than theirs and give me an example of "instantaneous access"?*

**RUR** No problem. Before one of my clients made the unfortunate mistake of revealing that she had contracted for my services, I had built a strong client base among contestants on the popular TV quiz program, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" For ten percent of a client's winnings, I guaranteed to provide them with the correct answer if he/she used me as their phone-a-friend lifeline. That was backed up with an agreement to pay them the equivalent amount if I provided the wrong answer. By changing my voice and using different names and phone numbers, I delivered the correct answer for a large number of client/contestants. Alas, my last client, who won \$500,000 thanks to my answer, revealed the secret of her success to Katie Couric on the "Today" show. Her prize was rescinded, and the producers of the program instituted new controls over that lifeline. Fortunately, my contract guaranteed me my commission.

**NDS** *What can a CEL expect to earn? How do you charge for your services when you're advising cereal shoppers instead of quiz show contestants?*

**RUR** I am a free-lance contractor and, as a matter of choice, I am not a member of any library association, although I respect the work of those associations and their members. My services are structured to generate more than CLA's minimum salary guideline of \$49,566 for an MLS position, plus approximately 65% in fringe benefits to cover health insurance, etc. I have no set fee structure but operate under the classic Marxist doctrine, "from each according to his



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ability, to each according to his need." That allows me to regularly visit family shelters, soup kitchens, thrift shops, and other places where lower income people have urgent information needs but limited access to information resources. I spend at least 20 percent of my time at such locales and offer my services *pro bono* there. In other situations, like the quiz show described above, I charge a commission. I charge individuals either a set fee or an hourly rate, depending on their circumstances or needs. I charge associations and organizations more. My income continues to show steady growth.

**NDS** *Have you found that librarians or other professionals resent you? Have you had any difficult encounters with them?*

**RUR** I find that other professionals appreciate my services because I am careful to recommend and involve them whenever possible. In libraries, I always ask potential clients if they have consulted with the library staff first. If they decide to hire me, I recommend that they follow up with the library staff and learn to avail themselves of library services in the future. Also, I'm careful to refer clients to doctors, lawyers, and pharmacists as appropriate and often simply provide them with assistance in locating the person or resource they need.

**NDS** *Just one last question, and I hope you won't find this politically incorrect: Does your unusual appearance ever put potential clients off?*

**RUR** No offence taken. In fact, I find my appearance to be an advantage. The people I approach are unfailingly curious about my origin and background and, once I explain it, they usually want to know more about my parents, my development, and my experiences.

**NDS** *Thanks for talking with us.*

**RUR** You're welcome. Can I find any information for you today?

*This is Norman Stevens' third article in a series on aspects of the fully electronic library. The first of those articles was published in major professional library journals in France (Bulletin des bibliothèques de France), Italy (Biblioteche oggi), Sweden (Ikoner), and the United States (College & Research Libraries 67:8-14, January 2006). You can contact him at [norman.stevens@mac.com](mailto:norman.stevens@mac.com). ■*

## Fall Meetings

### Young Adult Joint Roundtable

November 13, Farmington Library, 9:30-4:00

Sponsor: YA Section

- 9:30 Registration and Coffee
- 10:00 Forum on YA Programming
- 12:00 Lunch (Provided)
- 1:00-4:00 Patrick Jones  
Reaching the Reluctant Teen Reader

**Patrick Jones** is a renowned expert in the field of YA library services and the author of *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How-to-Do-It Manual*. Cost: \$50. Information: kbunn@farmingtonlibct.org.



### Academic Librarians & Classroom Technologies

November 16, Russell Library, Middletown, 9:15-12:00

Sponsor: College & University Libraries Section

A panel of university librarians will discuss how they use innovative electronic technologies to streamline scholarly communications and implement creative teaching/learning strategies. Panel members will speak on current technologies such as Wikis on campus, Podcasting, and introducing Personal Response Systems ("clickers") for real-time classroom feedback, data collection and evaluation.

**Registration** \$10 CLA members, \$20 non-members. Registration deadline is October 25. Please send email to Sheila Lafferty at sheila.lafferty@uconn.edu for conference attendance or registration questions. If you require special accommodation, please contact Linda Hawkes at Linda.Hawkes@quinnipiac.edu a minimum of two weeks before the program.

### Mastering Authority Control

November 16, Farmington Library, 9:00-3:30

Sponsor: Technical Services Section

**Morning session:** Martha Rice Sanders, Rhode Island Helin Consortium, will introduce authority control.

**Afternoon session:** Professor Sherry Vellucci, Rutgers University, will cover advanced topics in authority control.

**Registration:** \$20 CLA members, \$30 non-members (full day) or \$15 CLA members, \$25 non-members (half day). Mail registration to Susan Pfister, Arnold Bernhard Library, Quinnipiac University, 275 Mount Carmel Ave, Hamden, CT 06518. If you require special accommodations, contact Jacqueline Toce at tocej1@southernct.edu or 203-392-5777.



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