Two great programs kick off 2013 CLA Conference

**Monday Keynote April 29th 9-10 am**
The Promise of Libraries Transforming Communities

ALA President Maureen Sullivan will describe this new national initiative in which ALA is partnering with the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation to create a multi-phase program to provide libraries all across the country with the tools and training needed to help their communities to find innovative solutions through library-led community engagement. She will describe how librarians at all levels and in any type of library can become effective leaders and conveners of community conversations and engagement. Maureen will lead an interactive segment following her remarks.

**Tuesday Keynote April 30th 9-10 am**
Where We Live Radio Program Broadcast Live from Crowne Plaza Hotel

Program host, Mr. John Dankosky, will be joined by Maureen Sullivan, ALA President; Kendall Wiggin, State Librarian; and Carl DeMilia, President of CLA, to discuss current concerns for libraries and the communities they serve. Share your questions with this distinguished panel live on the air.

The CLA 2013 Conference will be held on April 29-30 at Crowne Plaza Hartford - Cromwell.
Libraries in Connecticut have been around awhile. A quick Internet check shows some start dates: Bridgeport in 1881; New Haven in 1886; Hartford in 1878. Long and resilient histories. But what’s to come? What will it all be like for these libraries in just ten years? No one knows for sure.

Edited by Canadian Michael Dudley, this book of solid essays, “Public Libraries and Resilient Cities,” gets us thinking about our future. “Resiliency” can be defined as responding effectively to changing circumstances in an uncertain world. Resiliency is a better word choice than sustainability, as resiliency suggests action, while sustainability sounds like we’re only keeping up, not running with fresh legs.

What this book does is to show us how some urban libraries have made an impact, despite terribly trying circumstances and dramatic events. The text covers examples of resiliency a chapter at a time, among them: a Food Assistance Program at the Peabody Institute Library in Massachusetts; the Queens Library Welcome Center in New York; Outreach Services of the Winnipeg Public Library; and the Recovery Support efforts of the Houston Public Library in Texas after a 2008 hurricane.

Maija Bendtson, from the Helsinki City Library, also provides a chapter on “placemaking.” She says that, “It is a paradoxical reality that the more digital material we have outside the library, the more important the physical library and its interior become.” Libraries are becoming, “community and cultural centers, living rooms for cities, digital hubs and mediatheques.” It’s true. We have buildings, and our buildings may be our greatest resource in the days to come.

Some libraries are even changing names: MediaSpaces, Idea Stores, or something in Thornton, Colorado, called the AnyThink (http://www.anythinklibraries.org) have now popped up. Renaming the library is probably overkill, MeThinks (that’s mine!). But a name certainly does matter. Personally, I’m a fan of adding the word “learning” to existing library designations so, the West Hartford Public Library would become the West Hartford Learning Library, for instance. It may take some getting used to, but that’s stronger, more active, and actually works well for every age. Something is gained, nothing is lost. And the “library,” remains, at least.

But back to the book under review. This book of essays stimulates by example, but it’s not prescriptive for our overall future, and no running commentary ties everything together. While we admire what others have done, we are largely left on our own, knee deep in our own situations, still trying a bit of this, a bit of that. We have our buildings, we have our librarians, we have our communities. But how do we arrange our pieces in the years to come?

Hands - who thinks we’re drifting? Wow, that’s a lot of hands.

A library business plan for our future? Let me be so bold as to put it in one word: Ideas. The thought of libraries evolving into mini-Teds (http://www.ted.com) for our communities has a very strong pull. Gathering up the good ideas, finding the best way for everyone to develop and present ideas in our reshaped meeting spaces (and online), well, that actually sounds magical. And that approach supports our future, conforms beautifully to our past, retains professional status, holds our information foundation dear, and, as editor Michael Dudley would say, moves us resiliently down a path imparting “reason, insight, wisdom, and inspiration.” Such is the library life, let’s stay true to it, and not give in to those who want us to be something else, or everything else.

Libraries, needed now more than ever

By Carl R. DeMilia, CLA President 2012-2013

When I was a new librarian twenty – five years ago, there was an ALA poster tacked to a bulletin board in my department. The poster promoted the idea that libraries were even more important during the bad times than they were in the good times. Being new this idea did not always register with me. At that time I had little practical evidence that I could relate to the statement.

In the intervening years though, I can attest to the truth of the idea. The reason I know it to be true was because I had seen it first-hand. My reference staff and I had helped many people. They came to the library at different points in their lives and for a many different reasons. The words on the poster had come alive in the everyday routine of the department.

We, as librarians, are in the business of helping people. That’s what we do. The breadth of informational requests is truly incredible. From simply answered questions to more complex research, we are here to assist in any way we may. As librarians we are also attuned to the world around us and thus continually striving to meet those new challenges as best we can.

These worldly challenges are varied but many are usually related to current economic issues of the day. We respond in turn with increased numbers of classes or individual instruction with resumes, job searches, applications, referrals and computer training. We make available a whole host of services in order to try and help people make it past the difficult time. Each of Connecticut’s libraries creates ways to help their citizens. By doing so, we have a positive impact on people and our towns.

One town, one library faced an unspeakable circumstance. The Cyrenius H. Booth Library in Newtown saw the opportunity to help their community during the darkest of days. Resources regarding grieving are available to all who are in need. The library initiated the Books Heal Hearts program that provides books and other materials to help foster the healing process of a community. All of these efforts by each of us only serve to reinforce what that poster had stated so long ago. Back then it was not as meaningful to me as it is today. Libraries are even more valuable during the bad times and serve to help all of our communities.

Carl DeMilia is Director of the New Milford Public Library.
Interview with a Librarian by Douglas Lord

Odds are good that, before she was announced as one of ten winners of the American Library Association’s national I Love My Librarian award, you’d never heard of Tunxis Community College’s Rachel Hyland. That’s because, though she earns wildly enthusiastic kudos from colleagues, Hyland is a thoughtful, self-effacing librarian who likes to fly under the radar.

If that sounds like a lot of librarians you know — maybe even yourself — Hyland agrees. “To be recognized for what I do every day was great,” she said, adding that “every librarian should’ get this award.”

Take note, though. The ‘every day’ business that Hyland is now notable for is a progressive, holistic version of librarianship that emphasizes relationships, not ‘traditional’ (e.g., passive) service. “As librarians need to be aware of what people are learning and how they learn it,” she says. In Hyland’s opinion, librarians tend to overestimate the ‘typical’ level of understanding that users bring to the research process and about what a library can provide. “Even if we get users to the ‘good’ information,” she says, “we assume that they’ll know what to do with it. They often don’t.” When librarians instead build relationships with students and faculty and between users and sources, magic happens.

Instead of simply teaching patrons keyword search strategies or directing them to the stacks at precise call numbers, says Hyland, ‘we need to explain the different sources and inform users that the information and knowledge out there is part of a broad, current dialog.” She adds, “it isn’t only about what’s inside the library. The world is now the collection, and without being the control freaks that we usually are, we need to take them there,” says Hyland. “We embody the potential and possibilities of libraries for them.”

Hyland illustrates this ‘curated’ type of service with an assignment on Timothy B. Tyson’s Blood Done Sign My Name. After being approached about a collaboration by a colleague in the Humanities Department who was using the book in his Composition II class Hyland read the book herself, constructed a Research Guide and taught a library instruction section along with the professor. Students came to see the library not as an add-on (e.g., ‘I received the assignment and now I’m going to the library’) but as a core part of resources available to them.

Hyland feels that the self-service era (e.g., ‘help patrons be independent’) has devalued the library profession in the public’s mind leading to ‘why do we need libraries anymore’ —type speculation. For her, “a response to that question comes when we craft something special from materials on hand and deliver it via meaningful, cultivated relationships, as artisans do, that’s what success looks like.”

If succeeding at all that sounds like a tall order, maybe that’s why Hyland won a national award. But it also earns raves from her faculty and colleagues, eleven of whom nominated her with comments including, ‘indispensable,’ (Robert Brown, Humanities) ‘brilliant,’ (Susan Gentry, Academic Strategies) and ‘rock-star librarian’ (Sally Terrell, Humanities).

Hyland is proud to be the only community college librarian to receive an award in 2012 and credits the faculty for being open to building relationships.

For the ceremony at New York City’s Times Center auditorium Hyland had a little fun, hiring a car and chauffeuring down her posse. In addition to coverage in American Libraries, Hyland rubbed shoulders with President of Carnegie Corporation of New York Vartan Gregorian, ALA President Maureen Sullivan and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Robert K. Massey.

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I have heard that the process of a major library renovation is much like child birth: once it is over, you don’t remember the pain. I was lucky enough to come to the Avon Free Public Library after the expansion and renovation of the building was complete, so I consider myself more of a step-parent. I missed all the mess (and fun) of construction, but still get to enjoy the benefits of a beautiful new facility that was under construction for 15 months.

Although the Avon Library traces its roots all the way back to 1798, when a collection of 111 books was loaned out of Samuel Bishop’s Ciderbrook Road home and Avon was still the Northington district of Farmington, the current library building was originally constructed in 1982. Through an agreement between the Town of Avon and the Board of Directors, the Avon Free Public Library, Inc. became a town department in 1978, while retaining its identity as a private institution. This cooperation continued, and Town of Avon funds were used to construct a new library on property which had been purchased in 1973 with funds raised by the Trustees. The location on Country Club Road was chosen because it is close to the geographical center of Avon, and within walking distance of the Avon Middle and High Schools.

In 1997, a renovation was completed to add an additional 4,500 square feet to the building, as well as make it more accessible and providing a dedicated storytime room, a quiet study, and better infrastructure for emerging technologies. While this project addressed some immediate needs, growth in both Avon’s population and library usage meant it wasn’t long before shelves were full and patrons frequently had trouble finding parking outside the library and seating or free computers within it.

Planning for another, much larger, expansion began more than a decade ago, and again was a collaborative effort between the library, the Town and the citizens of Avon. The Town purchased two properties adjacent to the library to expand our footprint. Library staff researched and evaluated other recently renovated libraries and learned what worked and what did not, along with securing state construction grants. And the people of Avon came together to run a very successful capital campaign, eventually raising over 1.3 million dollars to help fund the project.

The cooperation paid off, with the newly expanded Avon Free Public Library opening to the public in April of last year before a grand opening ceremony in June of 2012. The new addition to the building extends seamlessly from the original structure and more than doubled the size, to 40,000 square feet. The entryway was expanded and leads to the Library’s lobby and to the art gallery and new community room.

Service is at the center of our library, with the reference desk sitting prominently on the first floor. This important point of service can be seen from the main entrance, and is within view of the circulation desk and public computer areas. Our new computer lab and staff offices are conveniently adjacent. A two-story atrium houses new, custom-built magazine and newspaper racks, along with seating nooks for our patrons. The atrium brings in lots of natural light to both floors, and leads to a beautiful courtyard. The Marian Hunter History Room, a joint project between Avon Library and the Avon Historical Society, was moved onto the main level and now has a beautiful display case with rotating displays of local history artifacts, curated by volunteers from the Historical Society. The history room also houses what remains of the original collection of 111 books loaned by Samuel Bishop 215 years ago.

Upstairs, the Children’s Department doubled in size. Playful circles above and below draw patrons to our new storytime rooms, pre-school area, and parent seating area. The renovation provided ample space for staff offices and quiet study rooms as well, plus a puppet theater, dedicated computers for children’s e-books and educational games, a reading nook and a craft room.

Original windows are preserved in our new 1800 square-foot Teen Room, which features diner-style booths, 12 Mac and PC computers, a seating area with a TV and video games, quiet study rooms, and a service desk and office space for staff. This is the first time Avon Library has had a teen room (or a teen librarian), and students from Avon Middle and High Schools are flocking to it after school for socialization, study, and teen programs.

The work of the board and staff of Avon Free Public Library, coupled with the great community support from organizations like the Friends of the Library, the Avon Historical Society, the Avon Town Council, and the hundreds of individuals who donated time and/or money toward this project have certainly paid off. Avon has a great new library facility, and we are looking forward to making the most of it to benefit all of our users in the Farmington Valley.
Connecticut Author, Arthur Meyers

by Jennifer Datum

You can tell Arthur Meyers is passionate about the Open Forum Lecture Movement – so much so that he wrote his first book about it. And it will be his last, too, he told me as we sat down for a chat in his office at Russell Library in Middletown, where he is Director. After writing many articles for library publications, and writing extensively for history publications, he connected with Nancy Unger, a history professor at Santa Clara University, who encouraged him to write a book on the Open Forum movement.

Started in 1908, the Open Forum Lecture Movement involved inviting an expert to speak to a local population, with audiences asking questions. The idea is of “striking mind against mind” with active participation. Ford Hall Forum in Boston was the first, and it continues to this day to bring in speakers. The moderator of the forum was key, not necessarily the speaker, and the emphasis was on civil discourse. Meyers likens the movement to modern adult education, available to enrich people’s lives. He gave me a brochure for the National Issues Forum, which is a more recent endeavor “whose common interest is to promote public deliberation in America.”

It was hard to find a publisher, and he finally settled on the University Press of America, an academic press. He wanted to meet his deadline, so he did a lot of his writing at the end of the work day, and sometimes the weekend, at his home. The staff at Russell was very helpful in his research, in addition to in-person and electronic research through local libraries and archives. He had to do his own proofing of the text. At one point, he read it out loud to himself. The first printing has sold out, and the book is now in its second printing.

Meyers intends his book to be read by the general public. It will appeal to anyone who wants to build a better community. The book has received many glowing endorsements, and the next step will be getting positive reviews. He has begun speaking around the State, and he is willing to inscribe copies of the book.

When it comes to advice for aspiring writers, especially those interested in history as he is, Meyers says “there is local history everywhere, and loads of people to uncover. If it inspires someone to uncover people who have been lost to history, it will have accomplished quite a lot.”

*CLA Today*
Drupocalypse Now

Drupocalypse Part 2: How We Migrated to Drupal & What We Learned

Part 1 of this article was published in the December 2012 issue.

Now that you’ve heard why we chose Drupal for our website migration project at the Connecticut State Library, you probably want to know how we went about the project and what we learned along the way.

Our goal was not simply to redesign the website, but to redesign how we work on the web. With authors being able to easily publish content through Drupal, subject matter experts can be more proactive about maintaining their content. By allowing authors to work on their content without intervention from a gatekeeping “webmaster”, I can concentrate on the work of the 21st-century “webmaster” (a.k.a., web developer) - building and refining a system that supports the content and the users.

In the course of this process, we grew our in-house coding and platform administration capabilities. This will allow us to respond to usability findings and to accommodate changing technologies more quickly than we have in the past. A key finding from usability tests done on the old website was that our fragmented online presence - including catalogs, digital collections, and different websites for different departments - got in the way of our users’ success. It also prevented them from seeing the Connecticut State Library as one organization. Though we haven’t eliminated this problem yet, Drupal provides the necessary foundation for work that we’re now doing to bring these elements together.

The objective of the first phase of the Drupal project was to migrate content from our existing site to the Drupal platform. First, our Web Presence Committee came up with a list of functional requirements they wanted to see in the new Drupal system. This gave me a basis for module selection, a process which required research and testing.

Next, we had to conceptualize how the site’s content was going to be organized, edited, and presented from a structural point of view - creating the “information architecture” (IA) of the site. Drupal has a “taxonomy” module built into its core code. This module allows authors to categorize their web content. A site builder will define vocabularies and within those vocabularies, add the terms used to describe the content or else they will allow free-tagging by content authors. Drupal allows multiple vocabularies to describe a type of content and also allows a given vocabulary to be shared across multiple types of content.

We ran a “card sort” exercise to see how different people categorized the most popular content on our old site. We learned that non-librarians used fewer categories for content. For that reason, simplifying the new site’s primary menu became a requirement. At the same time, we knew that we’d need to leverage well-developed taxonomies in order to accommodate the needs of more expert audiences.

Drupal allows site builders to create different content types. There are a lot of reasons that this makes sense. After all, not all content found on the web is a “page”. Sometimes content consists of pdf files, images, or audio/video files. Additionally, web content may represent different conceptual entities (staff members or events, for example). Drupal allows you to customize different “content types” by adding custom fields (in addition to the title and body fields that are created for each content type by default). Specific fields such as “name” or “date of event” can then be leveraged to improve listings of that content. A “last name” field from a staff member content type may be used to sort a staff directory, for example.

Once the Drupal site structure was built, several colleagues did the amazing work of moving our web content over to the new Drupal site on a cloud-based staging server while I dealt with bugs, built out new features, and themed the site for go-live.

In the meantime, our IT staff had to build and configure the hardware, OS, and application stack that would host the production site.

The learning curve, stakeholder expectations, and scope creep can (and in our case, did) take a toll on a web project’s time estimates. In retrospect, I should’ve been much stricter about scope (or perhaps had a non-developing project manager enforce more realistic limitations in what could be done in a reasonable timeframe). The fundamental mistake I made that led to scope creep was a desire to make everyone happy with a new system. It is inevitable that any system or website change will bring unhappiness among some people. Trying to prevent this is a fool’s errand and will hang up your project.

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Take Your Child to the Library Day
February 2, 2013

Below is a brief roundup highlighting just a few of the many events that libraries around the State of Connecticut planned to celebrate Take Your Child to the Library Day:

NEW MILFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY held an “Amelia Bedelia Birthday Party” story time. 44 children and parents attended. We read some Amelia Bedelia stories, played some games and did a craft (an Amelia Bedelia Book Mobile). We all had lots of fun – much laughter at the antics and language misunderstandings that the very literal Amelia Bedelia makes. We also handed out pencils to people who came in to the children’s department that day.

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY—Close to 250 people stopped by Groton Public Library to celebrate Stretch, the library mascot’s birthday with special giraffe crafts, storytime and cake!

EASTON PUBLIC LIBRARY hosted award-winning musician Laura Doherty for a foot-tapping, hand-clapping good time! This event, which was held at 10:30am, was attended by 44 people. Then at 1:00, we had a Groundhog-Day themed Story Time with a craft, which was attended by 10 people. We served snacks throughout the day, including yummy heart-shaped cookies, and we raffled off a prize bundle of books, gift cards, and more!

STRATFORD LIBRARY celebrated Take Your Child to the Library Day with free books for every child and a ‘Happy Pig Day’ celebration in honor of Mo Willems’ book characters, Elephant and Piggie. We finished off the afternoon with a visit from Riverside Reptiles and their ‘Snake’ program complete with Snake cake made by the children’s librarians.
INTERVIEW WITH A LIBRARIAN CONTINUED FROM P. 4

Not bad for one of our own. After graduating summa cum laude (B.A., History) from Central Connecticut State University, Hyland attended Southern Connecticut State University for her M.L.S. While earning her Master’s, Hyland worked at CCSU in interlibrary loan under Stephen Cauffman, now re:Quest Interlibrary Loan Coordinator for the state library; “She was a real pleasure: smart, dedicated, hard-working, personable, and she made the job fun,” says Cauffman.

After that she became the first teen services librarian at the Farmington Libraries (1999-2001), and was then hired part time at Tunxis to work with the Middle College High School, a kind of magnet school of the Capitol Region Education Council, moving to full-time systems work when the opportunity arose in 2003. She now works as the Reference and Collection Development Librarian.

“I’m not at all surprised that she’s been so successful as a librarian, Cauffman adds. “I believe that she would be successful at whatever she put her mind to. I’m glad she chose librarianship as a career - the field is lucky to have her talents.”

Hyland loves the community college environment and its egalitarianism, calling it “a quintessentially American institution. It offers the best of public, school, and academic librarianship all rolled into one,” she says.

An omnivorous booklover, Hyland is reading The Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides by Samuel Johnson and James Boswell and My Brilliant Friend by Elena Ferrante.

Hyland sees herself as a living embodiment of Rerun van Pelt from the Peanuts Gang - even living the part on the back of her mom’s bike in the mid 70’s. Hyland loves old movies describes herself as a “total Beatlemaniac.” In fact, if she could have dinner with any two people living or dead, she would serve a Liverpool fryup for the duo of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Her two cats, Leila and Ishmael, help her watch baseball, which she notes works like antidepressants; a dose every day makes you feel good.

DRUPOCALYSE PART 2 CONTINUED FROM P. 7

The good news for other libraries is that there are ways to shortcut your Drupal project. Here are a few of them:

- if you’re just building a website, not a web platform, use the fully-hosted Drupal 7 -based (software-as-service) Drupalgardens.com platform. It’s like Wordpress.com for Drupal.

- to avoid server administration costs and learning overhead, use a Drupal-specific cloud hosting service, such as Acquia

- use an experienced Drupal development shop. Drupal has its own strengths and weaknesses that are unique among content management systems, so focus on a Drupal-specific shop, such as the library-oriented Cherry Hill Company

- if you’re building the project yourself, allot more time than you think will be necessary because research, learning, and testing can be a slow process