



June 25, 2009

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**Wisconsin Library Association Awards:
Celebrating Excellence in Library Service**

The Wisconsin Library Association is pleased to announce this year's library luminaries, selected as outstanding for their contribution to libraries and librarianship:

Library of the Year

UW-Sheboygan University Library

DEMCO/Librarian of the Year

Kathryn Hanson

Muriel Fuller Award

Darla Jean Kraus

WLA Highsmith Award

Ruff Readers Program – Racine Public Library

Special Service Award

Chelsea Couillard, Christina Johnson, Catherine Phan

Citation of Merit

Mead-Witter Foundation, Inc.

UW-Sheboygan University Library (Jeffrey Ellair, Director)

With the opening of a new, state-of-the-art facility in summer 2007, the UW-Sheboygan University Library now looks the part of a modern academic library. Housed on the first floor of the UW-Sheboygan Acuity Technology Center, it is appropriate that the library is situated at the main entrance to the campus. Exquisite architectural features, wireless Internet throughout, several full technology-equipped study rooms, a 36-seat computer lab and a variety of comfortable seating areas for study and research make this facility shine. But the library staff completes the picture of WLA's Library of the Year.

Library Director Jeffrey Ellair and staff have been systematically building and enhancing a comprehensive program of progressive library services for well over a decade. By implementing a series of student surveys and assessments, the staff has considered user needs in the design of the new building, acquisition policies and service development. When interlibrary loan skyrocketed, the staff created an internship program funded by the UW-Sheboygan Foundation that allowed the library to manage an increased workload.

UW-Sheboygan University Library showcases its excellence by giving the greater community access to the library's wealth of resources. In addition to welcoming area businesses and professionals, Director Ellair's visits to local high schools and public libraries have already resulted in greater use of the library by the public. In the two years since the new building opened, the gate count has tripled and reference and computer questions have increased by more than 83 percent.

Kathryn (Katie) Hanson, Library Director at Graham Public Library in Union Grove, is WLA's DEMCO Librarian of the Year. In 1972, Katie Hanson was hired as a library aide, and she later moved into the Children's Librarian position. She became director in 1987. During that time, she's learned the ropes of librarianship, making personal service her hallmark. Not only does she remember her patrons' book preferences, she has been known to make personal deliveries to those who could not leave home to pick up library books.

During her first ten years as director, she doubled the size of the library, increased staff to four full time and three part-time positions, and earned her bachelor's degree in business administration. She played an integral part in fundraising for the new library, and she recruited dozens of volunteers to set up the new space – and kept them happy and well-fed with home-baked cookies. You can also find her washing the library's windows, planting flowers and emptying the book drop on holidays – just to keep the library running smoothly and looking its best.

Since the completion of the library addition in 1990, Hanson has overseen many improvements to library service: automation of the library in 1998, public Internet access in 2001, hosting the Lakeshores Library System's Wide Area Network and being Union Grove's only public Wi-Fi network. In a time of shrinking budgets, Hanson has continued to expand library offerings. Most recently, she's increased service to older adults by expanding the large print and audio book collections, added programming for genealogy and local history groups, started needlepoint and quilting circles, and scheduled computer classes and talks by local authors. She also increased the scope of story times offered in order to include children as young as six months. She writes all about the library's offerings in her regular column in the local newspaper.

As a testament to her importance to the community, Katie Hanson was named the Union Grove Chamber of Commerce Woman of the Year in 2002. She has inspired one of her staff and her two daughters to become librarians. As the longest serving employee in the Village of Union Grove, she will help the community celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Graham Public Library in 2009. Fittingly, she will celebrate that milestone as WLA's DEMCO Librarian of the Year.

Darla Jean Kraus, Director of the Lakeview Community Library in Random Lake, is the 2009 Muriel Fuller Award winner. Kraus was appointed director of the library in 1976. In 1980, she worked to establish joint library service with four municipalities (Towns of Sherman and Scott and Villages of Random Lake and Adell). Many directors would find it a daunting task to gain

support for such a joint library, not to mention managing that partnership successfully for nearly 30 years - not Darla. In fact, she even undertook the remodeling of a historic structure and moved the library in 1996. She then managed phase two of the building project in 2003, which doubled the size of the library.

Darla Jean is a tireless and creative library promoter, adept at getting news coverage of library events. She leads two book discussion groups herself and has initiated many other programs, such as a Senior Health Fair, women's stress program, and Music by the Bay. She initiated hosting part of the late summer teachers' in-service at the public library, thereby giving library staff the opportunity to demonstrate to the teachers the resources available. The activity fosters collaboration with the school on major assignments and class visits. She worked with Meals on Wheels to establish homebound delivery of library materials and, with the help of a local Lions Club, created a rotating book collection for meal sites.

Under Darla Jean Kraus's direction, Lakeview Community Library has transformed from just another small library to a library with a big impact on the region.

The **Ruff Readers Program of the Racine Public Library** is recognized with WLA's Highsmith Award as an exemplary program with a measurable impact upon its users. The program began in the winter of 2006 as collaboration between the Racine Public Library and the members of the Racine Kennel Club who owned certified therapy dogs. The original intent of the program was to give the children of Racine an opportunity to practice their reading skills with a nonjudgmental and gentle listener, and foster a life-long love of reading. Though successful on that level with about 1,000 participating children, the program's impact has extended well beyond its basic purpose. Ruff Readers has fostered a relationship between the school and the library because of the noticeable, positive impact on student readers, motivated pre-readers to begin reading, and even helped patrons learn more about pet ownership and responsible interactions with animals.

Racine Public Library has since helped other libraries start their own versions of the Ruff Readers program.

Chelsea Couillard, Christina Johnson and Catherine Phan share the Special Service Award for their Community Needs Assessment for the Red Cliff Tribal Library, conducted when all three were students at the UW-Madison School of Library and Information Studies. In the summer of 2007, the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Bayfield County began to discuss closing the tribal library. The library was out of compliance with statutory requirements for system membership, usage was declining and little money was available from the tribal budget for the library.

The students were awarded a Kaufmann Entrepreneurship Community Internship grant for the summer and fall 2008-09 in order to conduct the needs assessment, under faculty supervision and staff cooperation, and in partnership with the Red Cliff Tribe. The students made monthly visits to the Red Cliff Reservation between June and November 2008, for community discussion and self-education. They collaborated with Joe Bresette, Red Cliff Tribal Operations Director; Jim Trojanowski, Northern Waters Library Service Director; Tim Kane, UW Extension Educator; and Janice Rice, UW-Madison librarian and then president of the American Indian Library Association.

Trojanowski, who nominated the group for the WLA Special Service award, reports that the Red Cliff Tribe is working hard to reopen the library. He states that though meeting statutory

requirements for system membership is likely to remain a challenge for the library, “the fact that any library service will be available is a remarkable achievement that is unlikely to have occurred without the work of Christina, Catherine and Chelsea.”

The final report, *Mazina'igan Wakai'igan: Red Cliff Tribal Library* was released in December 2008. Currently, Coulliard is employed in Children's Services at Baraboo Public Library; Johnson is the librarian in the American Indian Studies Library at UW-Madison; Phan is at MERIT, the School of Education Library at UW-Madison.

For the third time, the **Mead Witter Foundation, Inc.** of Wisconsin Rapids, receives the WLA Citation of Merit for its third major noncompetitive grant program for selected public libraries in central and northern Wisconsin. Grants totaling \$382,000 were awarded in 2008-09 to 68 libraries for reference materials, circulating print materials, library furnishings and computer equipment for public use, or special event programming and exhibits at the library. For instance, the McMillan Library in Wisconsin Rapids received \$25,000 for its 2009 adult concert series, which is one of the best public library concert series in the nation.

The Foundation has now given a total of \$1,206,000 through grants that have provided libraries and their patrons innumerable benefits, using a simple and straightforward application and reporting process. The Mead Witter Foundation's extraordinary generosity is especially welcome at this time of economic hardship.

WLA congratulates these stellar winners and will celebrate their accomplishments at an Awards & Honors Banquet at this year's WLA Conference in Appleton at the Radisson Paper Valley. The banquet will be held Thursday, October 22, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

WLA will present these award winners with a proclamation and plaque detailing their accomplishments. In addition to contributions from DEMCO and Highsmith, the WLA Awards program is supported by the WLA Foundation, through individual charitable contributions.

The Wisconsin Library Association brings together and supports people from all types of libraries to advocate and work for the improvement and development of library and information services in the state. The awards program is one way the association acknowledges the dedication of its members to provide exemplary library service to the people of Wisconsin. For more information about WLA, go to <http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/>.

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