



APLE Matters

March 2009

Association of Public Library Employees, UAW Local 5242

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Tom McDonald
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Patti Lusher
Michelle Thomas

APLE Website

www.orgsites.com/oh/aple

Officers' Column

What, Me Worry?

So, the County's unemployment rate is in double digits and more and more patrons are coming in for help with resumes, unemployment benefits and online applications – should we be worried?

So, when you're in an OLC Legislative Day Meeting with State Representative Peter Ujvagi (who happens to be on the House's Finance Committee) and he says that the State needs to create a "Survival Budget" – should we be worried?

So, you get an email from the Library's Director giving notice of an upcoming *Blade* article on the re-evaluation of property values in the County and how the devaluing of property could impact our current levy – should we be worried?

Yes, Yes and Yes. But it's not time to head for the hills- no, quite the contrary.

Now is the time to make sure that we as professional librarians assist our patrons through these tough economic times. As information specialists, we need to aid patrons in finding the information that can either continue their livelihoods or help them find something better. Who would have thought that the library would have become the extension office to so many government agencies and departments?

We were lucky enough to successfully pass a levy over a year ago and even though State funding is down, we seem to be weathering this economic storm – for now. So, it's important to keep up the great service, lobby state and local officials on funding issues and continue the services and programming that makes this library system one of the very best.

Be proud of your work.
Be proud of your union membership.

David and David

A Word on Staff Meetings

As prescribed in the APLE Contract, Staff Meetings should be occurring "no less than every two months." APLE has been hearing that this is not the case in some agencies. As we encourage communication at all levels throughout TLCPL, we want to make sure that every agency and department has time set

aside to provide an open exchange of information. For the Library to move to the next step of organizational evolution, communication through all levels of the Library is important and necessary. We are all members of the TLCPL Team and should be treated as such.

APLE Meeting Minutes - January 2009

Meeting brought to order.

Minutes of last meeting approved.

Treasurer's Report

Guest Presentation

Jim Funk, Director of Read for Literacy, gave a short presentation on his organization and the adult literacy situation in northwest Ohio. He said that despite the influx of volunteers, there will be a need for about 120 more volunteers in the next year. He discussed new initiatives of RFL, and praised APLE's participation in the Amazing Race for Literacy in the last two years.

Committee Reports

Free the Genie II Committee: Made up of more veteran employees, has split off into two new committees: one, dealing with creating standards for technology knowledge in the public service staff, and the other in cultivating and spreading the knowledge of the staff in the service of our public.

Staff Recognition: There will be positive changes announced soon in how the work of the committee is performed.

Wellness: The Wellness Committee met recently and discussed possible seminars for the future. The cookbook project is coming along. Plans are being made for the rest of the year. There has not been a full committee meeting for awhile, however. While there were some successes in 2008, like the pedometer project, most of the money was unspent at the end of the year.

Security Committee: They will meet later this month.

Green Committee: The gains made by this committee include the de-emphasis of plastic bag use, and the possible sale or giveaway of cloth bags. This may be co-sponsored by APLE. Reynolds Corners remodeling shows the library's commitment to green issues. Main library has already had an audit to find ways to be green and sustainable.

President's Report

Human Resources: A draft of the new contract should be available soon. "Health care" will be added as a line item to the budget. Ken Robie will be working as a consultant on this issue. There were no increases in health care insurance announced in December. Open position: APLE LIII in Outreach and Corrections. It's partially funded by the county, and they may not fully fund this position. It's not been decided. Right now, Gretchen Black is transitioning out of this position, but is doing it for now as part of her duties. They hope to fill the position of the Manager of Children's Library soon. The

Events Coordinator position has been filled by Jeff Smith.

Two APLE officers will serve on the ad-hoc Intranet Librarian Tab Committee: Patricia Crosby and Patti Lusher.

Jeanette Bell has been hired as a sub, and the Human Resources Department is interviewing others.

Waterville may be the first agency to try the "meet and greet" approach of having a candidate meet the staff before the hiring decision (for the position of the branch head).

The issue of regular staff meetings was discussed as ongoing. Every agency should have a staff meeting **at least** every other month.

LCT Meeting highlights: The last meeting featured a team building exercise. Much talk ensued on allowing staff to extend patrons' time on computers. LCT decided to leave it to the staff's discretion (with some guidelines), but it allow it if there are no reservations. The UT popular collection has been instituted. The new printing product is now being introduced to branches. Soon we will all be switched over. The new system requires money to be put on one's account, rather than on the physical card. The events calendar will be replaced soon. It will be searchable, and will take registrations for an event. There will be a major purge of inactive patron records, but NOT those that have been used for internet sign-up.

[New Business](#)

Logo Wear: APLE encourages the use of logo wear. A discussion ensued about whether APLE should offer an incentive. About 45 people have bought them so far. It was suggested that we show different pieces of the logo wear at Staff Development Day, union meetings, manager's meetings, and other internal events, and perhaps offer a small amount off (one-time only from the APLE treasury) for members.

Tech Services Survey: APLE encourages everybody to participate in the surveys. A discussion followed on Tech Service and circulation issues. Many want to make "title" the default in the new catalog, rather than keyword.

Library circulation increased 4% in 2008.

Progressive Discipline: APLE members who are threatened with being written up should let an officer know IMMEDIATELY. This constitutes an Unfair Labor Practice and does not follow the discipline procedures as outlined in the Contract.

Kronos Time Cards: The problem with accurate personal time hours has been corrected.

Next meeting: March 20th.

Meeting was adjourned.

Getting to know Technical Services

APLE would like to encourage all of our members to participate in the upcoming training/tour sessions on the 2nd Thursday of the month, 2-4 p.m. in Technical Services. We'd also like to suggest that if you can, you should attend the May 12th, 2 p.m. presentation by consultant Jeanne Goodrich.

Tech. Services should not be a mystery to staff and everyone should be aware of how this important department operates. The presentation by Jeanne Goodrich should be interesting from the standpoint of someone from the outside looking in and giving our processes a review.

Life in the Trenches by Linda Koss

What can you do with a question that is not a question, or is a question you can't possibly answer? I faced this (again) this morning with an irate woman who wanted to know the health hazards of standing water—the mosquito breeding risk, the disease risk, the risk of having your tires run through it and spreading disease to the street, where it would be picked up by feet, and taken into restaurants, etc. Of course, this was not really the question at all. Why was she really calling? After some picking and probing on my part, the patron spilled the beans: she had a long-standing feud with a neighbor who let water accumulate in her filthy trash cans, which were kept right on the property line and splashed water on the patron's driveway.

Her question was now a train running down the track with no chance of slowing down, jumping from one possible focal point to another. As the patron related, she called the city to have them do something about the neighbor, where a bureaucrat told her there was no law against letting the water stand in their trash cans, and anyway, lady, why don't you just tip the empty cans over? This made her livid. As a longtime resident, I could relate. I have called bureaucrats with complaints that they could darn well do something about, and they didn't do anything because doing something was not on their itinerary for the day. On the other hand, I could feel for the bureaucrat. There was no clear cut law regarding this, and if he or someone else came over to punish or investigate the neighbor, said neighbor could just empty out her can, yell at the bureaucrat, and he would have stuck his hand into the hornet's nest of a neighbor dispute for no real purpose. As for me, the librarian, what exactly was **I** doing in all this? Was there a point to this thing?

Sort of. Because she finally asked me if there *was* a law to cover this situation in the city code. And, sure enough, I fished around in the Municipal code until I found: "The Director of Health and Environment, the Commissioner of Environmental and Consumer Health, any Health/Environment sanitarian or police officer may compel any person to desist from and/or discontinue the engagement of any act, occupation, business, pursuit or proceeding, which, in the opinion of the Director of Health and Environment, Commissioner of Environmental and Consumer Health, sanitarian and/or police officer, is likely to occasion a public nuisance, or become dangerous to life or health." If you want to know, it's 139.11. I suppose it could protect the city from someone dumping nuclear waste in Wolf Creek, or spitting on the sidewalk.

Both of us pretty much knew the neighbor would not get busted for violating 139.11 any time soon, but her rage seemed to dissipate a little, and she seemed happy to have some ammo in her dealings with the next bureaucrat. She hung up on me before I could find it on the Internet and e-mail her the text.

Who among us has not had this experience many times over? Library researchers love to put the interactions we have with the public in all kinds of categories: reference questions, ready reference, directional, reader's advisory. This could be shoehorned into reference. But a more accurate assessment would put it under "Patron Getting Their Gripe On."

Sometimes this will happen in person when a patron wanders by the desk and gripes, but then they are usually griping about some library policy that makes them mad, or a book we own with a nasty passage that they don't think we should own, or a librarian at another agency who was mean and grumpy, not at all like the nice person they are talking to now. Very rarely does this result in a written-down complaint that goes anywhere. In fact, patrons often refuse the chance to write down a complaint when we offer it.

The phone version resembles a reference question, because patrons understand that those are the rules; like the game show Jeopardy, you have to phrase everything like a question to play. But since their real point is airing a complaint, the question has no real point, and may just be unanswerable, like the possible health hazards of dirty standing water. Sometimes, in scaling the steep wall of bureaucracy, nasty neighbors, or other problems, they try to find purchase in a tiny fact, like a section of the Toledo Municipal Code, to which they can cling. But mostly they just want to blow off steam.

Librarians dread these situations, because it's like trying to nail jelly to the wall. We are not retrieving or advising them of reading materials. We are mostly not finding information, except as a way of stoking their outrage. The informational request(s) kind of goes this way or that, and shifts around several times at different points of the interaction.

How long it lasts depends on many things, mostly from our side of the desk: if there are other patrons waiting, we might shepherd it to an early end. If the work day is slow anyhow, we might let it peter out at a leisurely pace. Sometimes, we even find a fact connected with the source of the gripe, and we can come to the mutual conclusion that we did a constructive thing. And if it happens when we are actually counting interactions, we can file it under "reference, 20 minutes +."

March APLE Meeting

Please join us on Friday, March 20 at 6 p.m. in the Sanger Branch Meeting Room for our APLE General Meeting.

We'll have the results from the 2009 Security Survey and the Training @ TLCPL Survey. You'll also hear the latest on Library-APLE labor relations and the Library Cooperative Team.

Pizza, beverages and all the latest news as always. See you there!