

## **A Message from the President: Crossing Borders, an imperative for our profession**

This issue of the PNLA Quarterly is focusing on a topic that is at the heart of PNLA's very existence. By definition, the Pacific Northwest Library Association is all about crossing borders. In last year's information survey, "networking" and "conference" were two of the top three membership benefits identified by participants, with the annual conference being the most important activity. In addition to the conference the border-crossing style of networking is continued in the YRCA and LEADS programs, which are mainstays of the organization. It has been interesting to give thought to the various types of borders we encounter. Some of these come to mind easily, while others are not so common in this context.

**Geographic** – As the only binational library association in North America, with a membership spanning two countries and seven states and provinces (and more!), our organization offers an unparalleled opportunity for networking across geopolitical borders. I have gained so much from the opportunity to attend sessions presented by Canadian library folks, as well as those from states different than my own! We each have ways of reaching our patrons which are unique to our own communities and which may be "foreign" because of local variations in culture and custom. The ability to learn from each other gives us a wealth of ideas and new concepts to try in our home communities.

**Library Type** – One of the things I value so much about PNLA is its inclusion of all types of libraries. In my public library world, I don't often have the opportunity to interact with folks from academic or special libraries. Having the ability to cross this "border" has demystified these other library worlds for me, and has brought me into contact with some awesome people with ideas that are surprisingly relevant to my library!

**Job categories** – Unlike many professional organizations, PNLA seeks to address the needs and interests of all library workers, regardless of degree. Library aides and assistants are as welcome to participate as are the more degreed colleagues among us. This crossover of perspective adds a depth and richness to our networking that is not often found elsewhere.

PNLA's commitment to free flow of our profession across all sorts of borders comes together in the LEADS program. In their study of the PNLA LEADS program, Melody Sky Eisler and Brianna Hoffman reported that survey respondents listed some of the values of the program as:

inspiring library staff to lead from any position (positional borders)

networking with library professionals across the region and in different types of libraries (geographic and library borders)

strength to reach out to tribal and rural libraries, connecting otherwise isolated areas within the region (geographic and cultural borders)

As we seek to move forward as a strong, healthy and relevant organization, PNLA will remain

committed to our multi-faceted border-crossing style of networking, and I look forward to the opportunity to learn from each of you!!

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