

Librarian's Shelf by Jill Owens

Behind the scenes at your library

If there is anything I've learned in my decades of adulthood, it is that no job is as simple as it appears. Let's pull back the curtain on a sampling of what staff does to keep your library running.

Customer service and providing a welcoming space is our priority. This includes working on accessibility to materials and services, through various formats and practices that aid user-friendliness. We provide patron assistance in the form of resources, in-person information, meeting space, readers' advisory, programs, office machines, computers, and other technology.

We count things. The annual statistical report has about 226 fields which must be filled with accurate statistics staff needs to track for the Nebraska Library Commission. Many staff are responsible for reports in which they tally everything from traffic count to number of computer uses, and other minutia. Staff also counts bookmobile stop times and hours, and fills out mileage logs.

And of course we track expenditures and revenues to stay on budgets we prepare. We watch for grant opportunities such as the e-rate refund. Along with counting, we regularly evaluate data, and adjust practices as needed.

We handle, maintain, and update materials as well as counting them. Selecting, ordering, unpacking, processing, cataloging, weeding, displaying, and repairing are constant. We inventory and shelve things. In addition to maintaining library and bookmobile collections, we also maintain the bookmobile, the building, the grounds, and all our equipment.

We plan and we coordinate. Our five year strategic plan is always in mind as we budget, prioritize limited staff time, and plan our programs, technology, space, and collections among other things. To help coordinate we meet and we report. A main purpose of meetings is to work with other departments and organizations, internal and external, on technology, programs, purchases, and services.

We report to the federal and state governments and agencies, the city officials and department heads, the Library Board, the Foundation Board, to one another at staff and leadership meetings, at Friends of the Library meetings, at Chamber meetings. We meet with our consortium, steering, and other ad hoc committees of all of the above. Each meeting comes with its preparation, packets, and follow-up work. Some of us have had as many as seven meetings in one day.

We program and reach out with fun and educational events, including clubs, for patrons of all ages both in the library and outside the walls. In addition to partnering with other entities, staff takes story time to preschools and daycares, materials are delivered to homebound patrons, and visits are made to adult residential facilities. We also reach out through our website, [www.http://www.columbusne.us](http://www.columbusne.us), social media, columns, and presentations. We remind borrowers to return their materials.

We continue to learn by attending conferences, workshops, and seminars either online or in person. We have enrolled in a certification program through the Nebraska Library Commission which tracks our continuing education hours.

We anticipate. Staying on top of innovations in library services is a fun challenge. Continuing education, networking with other librarians, and reading professional publications really helps with this.

We are held accountable by accreditation standards. Many of these are taken care of by all the work noted here, but all has to be reported in a certain format and on a deadline.

We fill out forms, write notes, reports, and memos. We produce, receive, and manage a lot of paperwork and electronic communication.

Policy work, by-laws, and managing volunteers, and other day to day activities that come up make up more of our behind the scenes work.

Recent donations to the Columbus Public Library were received from Scott and Patricia Mueller in memory of Rikki Klink; Bud and Rita Fleischer, and Jeff and Janie Schneider in memory of Helen Weber; and Phyllis Wragge in memory of Dee Young Maben.

Butch and Duff Christiansen donated to the Columbus Library Foundation in memory of Jenni Robak, and Bud and Rita Fleischer, and Dave and Sue Oppliger donated in memory of Betty Grant. Also donating to the Foundation were Phyllis Wragge in memory of Kris Krumland, and William and Marge Prokupek in memory of Diana Mayben and Helen Weber.