

Washington State Library: Using technology to connect with patrons

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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Since its creation in 1853, the Washington State Library has made it a priority to provide patrons with access to information and historical publications related to Washington and the Pacific Northwest. The remarkable progress in technology over the years has allowed people to acquire information and publications faster and easier than ever before. The Washington State Library has embraced technology to make its offerings more accessible to the public. These statistics indicate that. From 2002 to 2009: • The number of visitors to the State Library has increased by 22 percent, from 370,328 to 451,865. • The number of books checked out has risen 78.6 percent, from 648,487 to 1,157,992 (in the first six months of 2010, 624,765 books have been checked out). • State Library Web site usage has skyrocketed up an amazing 1,570 percent, from 33,827 to 564,787 page views (there have been 313,765 page views in the first six months of 2010).

In addition, 2009 patrons used the State Library's online historical books and maps 427,026 times and online newspapers on 124,791 occasions. Through the first six months of 2010, online book/map usage is 325,667 and newspaper usage is 154,632, showing that this is an increasingly popular online feature. It's fitting that the State Library's mission is "To ensure that Washingtonians have access to the information they need today and to the history of Washington for tomorrow." The State Library is taking advantage of recent technological advances to help its patrons find information in more ways than ever. Below are examples of how the State Library is using technology to connect with its patrons. **Ask-WA: Washington's Statewide Virtual Reference Cooperative** Coordinated by the State Library, Ask-WA is a cooperative of more than 60 libraries throughout Washington providing online reference services via chat, e-mail, and instantmessaging technologies. Ask-WA ties into a global network, allowing participating libraries to provide 24/7 reference service. The State Library has made available a new "Ask-WA" app for "smart phone" users. This is the first app of its kind in America in terms of "mobile-izing" an entire statewide virtual reference service. The Ask-WA app, the first one offered by the State Library, is available for both Android and iDevice (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch) users. People can check out and download this new app for Android at: <http://www.androidpit.com/en/android/...p/gov.wa.sos.askwa/Ask-WA>. To download the app for iDevices, go to: <http://itunes.apple.com/app/ask-wa/id384143749>. Contact: Ahniwa Ferrari, (360) 570-5560, ahniwa.ferrari@sos.wa.gov **Off the Page: Downloadable Audiobooks for Washington** This project provides free access to collections of eAudiobooks to public, academic and K-12 school libraries throughout the state. The State Library has this link (<http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/audiobooks/>) that lists the public libraries offering access to these free eAudiobooks. To access the downloadable audiobooks, a library patron would log into the vendor's site, which requires authentication (usually provided by entering the patron's library card number), select a book, and then "check out" the book by downloading the file or files. Most eAudiobook files are broken down into several parts, usually in roughly one-hour segments, so that one can download and start listening right away without having to download all eight or 12 hours of some longer books. The length of time it will take to download depends largely on the speed of the user's connection. Contacts: Will Stuiwenga, (360)

704-5217, will.stuivenga@sos.wa.gov or Ahniwa Ferrari, (360) 570-5587, ahniwa.ferrari@sos.wa.gov

Statewide Database Licensing (SDL) Non-profit Washington libraries receive the ProQuest and eLibrary database collections, providing online access to more than 4,500 full-text journals and other sources, including CultureGrams and several Washington and hundreds of national and international newspapers. Federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding subsidizes half the cost, with libraries providing the rest. *Contacts: Will Stuivenga, (360) 704-5217, will.stuivenga@sos.wa.gov or Ahniwa Ferrari, (360) 570-5587, ahniwa.ferrari@sos.wa.gov*

Washington State's National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) WA -NDNP is a collaborative project to digitize and provide enhanced access to Washington's historic newspapers. The project is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and managed in part by the Library of Congress. The program web site, called Chronicling America, provides free and open access to more than 2.3 million full-text searchable pages from 295 titles published between 1860 and 1922 in 19 states and the District of Columbia. The [Washington State Library's National Digital Newspaper Program \(NDNP\) grant](#) was recently renewed through June of 2012, allowing more pages from other newspapers around Washington State to be uploaded over the next two years. *Contact: Laura Robinson, (360) 570-5568, laura.robinson@sos.wa.gov*

Historical Newspapers in Washington Historical newspapers are primary research tools for students, teachers, historians and genealogists. Newspapers document the daily life of communities in a way no history book can. The State Library is digitizing some of its earliest, most historic newspapers for this project. People can use the Internet to access the Washington State Library's Historical Newspapers in Washington project by going to: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/history/newspapers.aspx> *Contact: Marlys Rudeen, (360) 704-7132, marlys.rudeen@sos.wa.gov*

Washington History Online Classics in Washington History offers searchable, full-text versions of significant biographies and histories covering early Washington explorations, pioneer life and local history. <http://www.sos.wa.gov/history/publications.aspx> The Historical Maps page features online maps drawn from state and territorial government records, historic books, federal documents, and the Northwest collection. <http://www.sos.wa.gov/history/maps.aspx> *Contact: Marlys Rudeen, (360) 704-7132, marlys.rudeen@sos.wa.gov*

Washington Rural Heritage The Washington Rural Heritage (WRH) program is an online repository of special collections in and around small, rural communities throughout the state. It features items important to Washington's history, culture, places and people. This program enables small, rural libraries to build digital collections of historically significant materials from their own holdings. The physical collections are housed locally by their owners, while the digital collections are hosted by the State Library. The research, digitization and cataloging of items is a collaborative effort between local staff and volunteers at local libraries and the Washington State Library staff. So far, Washington Rural Heritage has published 15 collections. To date, almost 30 libraries and partnering heritage institutions throughout the state have contributed to the project. There are more than 5,000 items in the rural heritage collection, although not all are published online yet. *Contact: Evan Robb, (360) 704-5228, evan.robb@sos.wa.gov*

Wayfinder: The Catalog of Washington Libraries

“Wayfinder” is an online catalog that provides a single search for locating materials owned by most libraries in Washington. The State Library's goal is to eventually include all of Washington's libraries in this catalog. Wayfinder currently allows people to search for materials among nearly 18 million items found in 250-plus Washington libraries. If you are a researcher or student looking for a tough-to-find item, the Wayfinder catalog will be especially useful by helping you pinpoint where you can find it. To visit the State Library's Wayfinder page, go to: <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/quicklinks/Wayfinder>. The link also provides information about Wayfinder that is geared toward librarians. *Contact: Will Stuivenga, (360) 704-5217, will.stuivenga@sos.wa.gov*

Ask a Librarian The Ask a Librarian service connects people to

librarians who answer questions about Washington or Pacific Northwest history and culture; federal, state or local government; genealogical information; current and historical Washington newspapers; and more. Patrons can talk to a librarian via chat, e-mail, telephone, or in person.

Contact: Crystal Lentz, (360) 704-5275, crystal.lentz@sos.wa.gov **Hard Times Resource Portal**

The Hard Times Resource Portal makes job-related information and resources just a few clicks away on a computer. It compiles useful resources for Washington library users and staff during the currently tough economic times. The portal includes resources to help users find jobs, develop resumes and interview skills, file for unemployment, manage money and finances, and find education and worker training information and resources. It also provides links to mortgage help and affordable housing. It literally places lots of helpful information at someone's fingertips. Contact: Ahniwa Ferrari, (360) 570-5587, ahniwa.ferrari@sos.wa.gov **Renew**

Washington The Renew Washington project provides grant funds to libraries to address the needs of people who are affected by the downturn in the economy. Through these grants libraries are helping individuals search and apply online for jobs, write resumes, seek mortgage information, start small businesses, and assist those who need access to employment-related information, resources and services. The project is also helping libraries communicate their value to their communities. Contact: Karen Goettling, (360) 570-5561, karen.goettling@sos.wa.gov