Yakima Valley Libraries History of Leadership

Richard Ostrander – Director, Yakima Valley Regional Library

(August 1973 – December 1966)

Richard Ostrander (1932-2014) was appointed Director of YVRL in August of 1973 and served until December of 1996. He was the first head librarian to be given the title of Director. Ostrander was a graduate from Syracuse University, with a bachelor's degree in history and a master's of library science.

During his tenure as Director, Richard Ostrander was confronted with a series of economic crises: the 1973 stock market crash caused by the OPEC oil embargo, 11% unemployment in 1982-83, and repeated bouts of high inflation. Rapid changes within the library industry also presented serious financial challenges to his administration.

For example, during Ostrander's first year as Director the library had $654,208.00 to spend. At the end of his tenure in 1996, the library's revenue had climbed to $3,496,040.00, a 434% increase. However, due to inflation, the library's purchasing power was only 47% greater in 1996 than it was in 1973. And those watered-down 1996 dollars had to be stretched much further than before to keep up with changes in library management technologies.

As automation changed the library workflow, library work became more specialized and better paid. By the early 1970's established library classification systems and bibliographic standards began to be harnessed to computer technology.[1] Ostrander had to find room in an already tight budget for new technology tools.

Perhaps Richard Ostrander's most enduring contribution to library services in the Yakima Valley was to advance the work of consolidating YVRL into a unified library district. Accomplishments during his administration include:

1. Plath Forums established to provide professional development for library staff.
2. Innovative ways of delivering library services
    a. 1976 – sign language story hours
    b. 1979 – Story hours by cable tv
    c. 12/1982 – Telecourse instruction from YVC
    d. 1983 - Introduced Ringgold Manufacturing's computer based circulation system called Nonesuch. Operational 3/6/1984
    e. 5/1984 began circulating cameras
3. 1976 – Furnished the new Summitview building.
4. 1976 – Selah Library asks to join regional system
5. 1976 – Tattle tape detection system

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[1] Rayward, W. Boyde. "History of Computer Applications in Libraries: Prolegomena." *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* Spring, no. April-June (2002): 4–15.

6. 1976 – Telephones installed in community libraries.
7. 1977 – Final payment on 20 year bond for new library building
8. 1979 – New Moxee Library in Sept.
9. 3/1980 – Toppenish approval of contract services
10. 11/1981 – Moxee Annexation
11. 8/1984 – New Granger Library building
12. 1994 - Libraries provide public Internet access.

After retiring in 1996, Ostrander served as a library trustee in 2009 and 2010.