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'Library is a people place'

Local History

Stories
by
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What do you see when you look in a library?

Richard E. Ostrander, new director of the Yakima Valley Regional Library, sees people.

People reading. People asking. People learning. People enjoying. People searching. People relaxing. People working.

"A library is a people place," said Ostrander in an interview. "It's not just a building of books. It's a building filled with people wanting to be served."

Ostrander arrived in Yakima in August to take the director post after retirement of Mrs. June Thurston.

"Don't let anyone kid you," Ostrander said. "Reading tastes aren't all that different from one part of the country to the next. You always hear that people in New York or back East are so much more culturally aware and read on a much higher intellectual level than the country as a whole. It's not true. They're reading the same things as Yakimans."

Ostrander was assistant director of the Lincoln Public Library in Nebraska; coordinator of branches at the Free Public Library in Woodbridge, N.J.; assistant director of the Long Beach Public Library in Long Beach, N.Y., and librarian at Yonkers Public Library in New York. "People are reading more than they used to in spite of the electronic media. I think it's because kids are more knowledgeable. And book stores and libraries are displaying materials in a way so that they reach out and tap people on the shoulder. Schools and book clubs are also pushing reading."

"It's not just novels that are popular. People are interested in everything. At the library, social science topics are big, especially those that deal with how other people live their lives and find solutions to problems."

Ostrander noted that more people are checking out library materials than ever before. Last year in the county system, 646,059 pieces of material were circulated. In 1971, circulation was 630,213.

"Freedom of accessibility is important to stimulating reading interests," said Ostrander. "I don't believe in censorship. I subscribe to the Library Bill of Rights of the American Library Association which states that censorship should be challenged by libraries in the maintenance of their responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment."

Ostrander said the reason such books as "Playboy", "Ramparts" and auto repair manuals are kept at the checkout desk rather than on the shelves, is because of their popularity. People cut out the pictures and often steal the magazines.

"People have a right to read any paper or book they want. I'm not going to tell them they can't," said Ostrander.

"The name of the game is balance. We try to take all of the reading public into account when purchasing books. We read reviews and take recommendations from the public before we make a decision on the purchase of a book. The usual reason we turn a book down is because it is badly written."

The real problem is trying to choose new books from the more than 30,000 new titles printed yearly.

"We have to be more selective in choosing what the community wants," said Ostrander.

The new director likes variety in his reading. Science fiction, history, mysteries, westerns.

He hopes to continue most of the programs at the regional library.

Recently, the library began sending bookmobiles to the city and county jails and nursing homes.

He also hopes to better develop the collections in all the branches.

He also hopes to interest the public in utilizing the library for more meetings and workshops.

"I've seen a lot of libraries and this is one of the best. People should take advantage of what it has to offer."



RICHARD OSTRANDER
... more people are reading



... name of game is balance.



... library is one of the best.

Yakima Valley Regional Library

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