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You Gotta Go to School for That?

Library Christmas Newsletters by Jerry Seay (College of Charleston)

I know the one thing that is sticking in your mind after all the events of the holidays is those family newsletters. You know the ones that are sent out in place of Christmas cards? It is actually a very practical thing. Folks just write down everything that happened in their family, make zillions of copies on pretty holiday paper, and send them out to everyone they know (and likely to folks they don't). Sure beats the heck out of getting writer's cramp trying to write to everyone individually. Golly, who does that anymore?

The downside of this is that those yearly newsletters tend to be heavy on the "looky what we did great this year." Of course, maybe this is just the opinion of those who receive the newsletters, since usually these folks were too lazy to sit down and concoct a fancy newsletter themselves, and they are a bit miffed that someone else had the gumption to do it while they either got a terrible case of writer's cramps or else didn't send any cards at all. In any case, the newsletters do tend to be either very boring: "yes, the yew tree finally died and Granny is doing better since she stopped coughing up her breakfast." Or else they tend to exaggerate the positive just a little. "We are so very proud of Uncle Ben. He got out of prison three years early on good behavior and won the 'model prisoner' award. The baskets he made took first prize at the county fair, and many of Ben's cell mates commented that they sure wish they had a great family like us when they robbed the seven eleven."

Well, I think it's time that libraries started sending out these newsletters to friends, family and government officials. It would be a perfect way to get the word out to an info-starved public about what we really do in these vast storehouses of human knowledge. I can see it now . . .

"Greetings all friends, family and government officials! It sure has been a banner year here at the ol' library. We sure hope your year has been as fruitful

as ours. We've been having so much excitement serving our patrons' needs and spending government money in a most judicious way that we almost forgot where the time went. We are just proud as punch at how good we've been doing this year. Now, some folks might have been a little down after what happened with the smoke grenades, the card catalog drawers, and the police and all. It did take us a while to get the library back in shape after that party. I guess it would not have been half as bad if it were not for the circus animals and those cheerleaders. But the good news, of course, was that no one pressed any charges, the SWAT team ended up having fun, and the county council pitched in an extra grand for good measure.

"Nobody got a raise again this year, but we are all still just as happy to be here working twice as hard for half as much to serve our patrons' needs. And they appreciated us more this year too. Our drive by shootings were down by 50 percent this year, and we attribute it to our smart thinking for installing those "I love Barney" book drop boxes on the curb. (Now they shoot at that instead of us.) Of course, everyone is extra proud of our great acquisitions staff again this year. Once again they have managed to order more new books than you can shake a big stick at. And, in keeping with our new cutting edge "knowledge just ain't in books, you know" policy, the tech services staff acquired and cataloged zillions of non-book items including: 138 computer disks, 17 Nintendo games, 201 books on tape, 29 scratch and sniff tags, 173 cereal box tops, and 385 baseball cards.

"Reference and public services have done great jobs this year and we feel that we have been able to keep the number of stupid questions to a minimum by increasing the number of stupid answers. We are happy to report that our library won the "State Institution Least Likely to be Closed Down to Save Taxpayer Money for Better Things like Casinos

Award" from the state budget and control board. We don't mean to brag, but our librarians were also once again voted most attractive state employees this year. Yes, we have managed to keep hair buns to a minimum. Our AUL for Public Services even made the cover of "Play Librarian." We are only slightly concerned that our director did not make the final cut for the Nobel Prize for Librarianship. He shrugged it off good-naturedly by saying that he'd much rather be mixing with patrons and answering ref questions than being bothered with all the jet-setting hoopla and millions of dollars. He is funny that way. Of course we were all proud of our shelving coordinator, James, for saving the lives of those four patrons who were trapped for two days under fallen shelving in the Juvenile section. Only one of the patrons is still in therapy for flashbacks from: *The Pokey Little Puppy*. Bill, our Special Collections coordinator, is still trying to figure out what to do with all the Star Trek paraphernalia donated to the library by Mr. Shatner. In the meantime, he is the life of all library parties with those pointy ears.

"Well, as you can see, the year has been pretty routine. We hope your year has been even better. And as we look forward to next year, we wish you and your library all the best and a minimum of the worst. Write soon, and don't forget to spread a little library cheer wherever you go. Happy Holidays."

On second thought, maybe Hallmark has a better idea. . . ☺