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Editorial: Our Shared Boat

Just a few weeks ago, librarians from all over the state of Idaho converged on the little town of Burley for the Idaho Library Association Annual Conference. For two days, hundreds of us rubbed shoulders and enjoyed workshops on everything from gaming to consumer health. We shared practical and theoretical advice, heard authors discuss their craft, and enjoyed a trip to historic Oakley. But what was truly unique about this conference was that, for the first time, the workshops were not divided into tracks by library type. Instead, they were organized by those topics and issues that apply to every library: How-to, Hands-on; Children and Young Adult Services; Technology; Adult Programming; and Leadership, Grants, etc. Librarians and professional staff of all “types” learned about and discussed the shared issues that touch us all, regardless of the type of library in which we work.

That’s a point that should give us all pause. Too often we compartmentalize ourselves into library categories, allowing our job descriptions to box us in. Public, school, special, or academic, we’ll all accomplish more if we focus on the fact that we’re all in libraries. Just like this year’s ILA conference, we need to break down those barriers by taking the modifier off our titles and see ourselves as *librarians* (MLS or not) who have much more in common than we have differences:

- Economically, all of us are dealing with shrinking budgets at a time when the costs of resources and technology are increasing;
- We are all juggling to meet the needs of our increasing numbers of patrons during the current economic downturn.
- In a society increasingly polarized by differing ideologies, we are all responsible for combating book challenges and protecting our patrons’ intellectual freedom;
- The Information Age continues to bring us new technologies and formats, making our roles as information literacy advocates and educators ever more important;
- Impending retirements, coupled with a shortage of qualified new librarians, will present staffing and workload problems for the foreseeable future;
- Across library boundaries, we all share the challenges relative to our particular roles—those in reference struggle with difficult patrons, catalogers strive to improve challenging systems, etc.

We are all facing the challenge of finding creative solutions to new issues in our field, and to constantly reinvent ourselves and our libraries as we struggle to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world. To borrow a well-worn and apt metaphor: we’re all in the same boat. And rather than attempting to row each in our own direction, we need—now more than ever—to work together in pursuit of our common goals, and to focus on our commonalities at a time when unity of purpose and pooling of resources is imperative.

So no matter whether we work in a public or an academic library; whether we ply our trade in Post Falls or Idaho Falls; whether our libraries are connected to a corporation or school district; whether we work with staffs of dozens or staffs of one; no matter whether rural or urban, online or offline, scholars or citizens, we are connected by issues that concern us all. Necessity will force us to deal with the unique situations that come up in our separate spheres, but only an active decision to take the opportunity to work together on common problems by sharing ideas, knowledge, and experience will allow us to tap into a wealth of knowledge and experience that will make us all better. To paraphrase another time-worn adage: a rising tide of cooperation will lift all of our boats, be they academic, public, special, or school. We are not alone,

and we need not feel that we are. Connectivity and communication are the hallmarks of our age: let's make use of them.

That is the spirit behind *The Idaho Librarian*. Our goal is to provide an open and welcoming forum for all Idaho libraries, librarians, staff, and library users regardless of library type, job title, degree, geography, or any of the variety of other characteristics we use to separate ourselves. This publication – a hybrid combination of news, feature articles, and scholarly (refereed) articles – is here to bring us together. *The Idaho Librarian* Editorial Board is composed of people from a variety of locations and libraries throughout Idaho, and our primary goal is to ensure that every voice of Idaho's libraries has a place to be heard.

What about you? Has your voice been heard? Your contributions, feedback, and ideas are welcome at any time. Want to go further? Volunteer for *The Idaho Librarian* Editorial Board. For more information, please contact the [Editor](#).

The Idaho Librarian is a publication of the [Idaho Library Association](#).