

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #10
“Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory and 33 years of Sno-Isle Libraries”
Sno-Isle Libraries, Nov. 21, 2018



Speaker 2: 00:00:00 Is there a preschooler running around in your life? Then check out the Sno-Isle Libraries Countdown to Kindergarten List of 100 Essential Picture Books. Find this book list and many more online at Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 00:00:24 In today's episode we'll spend some time with the outgoing head of Sno-Isle Libraries and during the next hour we hope to learn more about her early life in the northern corner of Washington state, her professional career as a librarian and Executive Director, and the organization she's led for over three decades. All that and more in Check It Out.

Ken Harvey: 00:00:46 Welcome to episode 10 of the Check It Out! Podcast from Sno-Isle Libraries. This is the podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds and made possible by the support of the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation.

Speaker 2: 00:00:58 The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 00:01:06 Our guest today is Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory who is the outgoing Executive Director of Sno-Isle Libraries. Jonalyn retires at the end of November 2018 with over 33 years of service with our two county library system and over 16 years as our Executive Director. Her first job with Sno-Isle Libraries was as a manager for the Marysville Library back in 1985. She soon became Assistant Director and then Deputy Director. She actually took over as Executive Director in 2002. Jonalyn, we are so glad to have you on this podcast. Thank you for joining us.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:01:43 Oh you're very welcome. I'm excited too.

Ken Harvey: 00:01:46 So when I say joining us I'm not just speaking in the royal we I'm also talking about all of our listeners out there and it's been really gratifying to know that we've had thousands and thousands of listeners of this podcast and part of that I think is thanks to you for saying yes to the idea of doing a podcast.

(Continued)

- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:02:09 Well I'm glad it has taken off with such gusto.
- Ken Harvey: 00:02:13 Well it's really interesting to me that as Executive Director and having served with you as part of your staff I've just seen you be part of so many different innovative things that Sno-Isle Libraries has done over the years and I'd like to just maybe start with your thoughts of kind of looking back over your career and some of the innovations that you've seen and some of them that you've had a hand in, maybe not having done all the work but talked with staff about ideas that they had and you said yes let's do that. Are there some things that you're really just glad that you've been part of?
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:03:06 Sure. And I think those kinds of things range from pretty small, a specific service let's say and then also building projects. But when I look back and I think about one of the earliest services that I'm the most proud of was something that happened when I was the Assistant Director a long time ago and that was to really move forward with a strong service to preschools and daycares. And so this is home service. And at that time I had a little girl.
- Ken Harvey: 00:03:50 Well you said Home Service. What does that mean?
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:03:51 Sure. So we actually, our staff took boxes of books, appropriate pre-learning kinds of materials off to different preschools and daycares, would provide a story program modeling to both the teachers at the school about the kinds of materials that are appropriate for various ages and also how to present those materials. So staff might take a box of 30-40 items, go into a preschool, provide a program for 30 to 45 minutes now, leave some materials behind for the teachers and then load up and then come back the next month.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:04:41 And I have sort of a funny story about that. I had said to the staff at one point "I'd be really happy to substitute for you. So just let me know and I'll load up." And so one day they came to me and they said "Oh we could really use you today." So I loaded up my station wagon, took my box of books, went in to the childcare, I had a great time, the kids were just so excited and I was excited and then I went back out, loaded my stuff in the car, slammed the lid down on my trunk and I realized that I had locked my keys into the car. And I before I had left as I said goodbye to staff I said "Don't worry about me, I won't cause you any trouble." So I had to go back into the building and call up and apologize and actually created more work for them because they needed to round up my husband, find the keys and come

in and get me. So I really appreciated at that time their tolerance. But it was just a wonderful day with those kids.

Ken Harvey: 00:05:57 Well as someone who just recently locked keys in a car with the motor running and the radio running I completely understand and I don't think anything less of you.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:06:11 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 00:06:13 Thankfully in my case I had left the window gapped enough for me to figure out a way to get in and pop the lock on the car. But this kind of service that you have just mentioned that's different than bookmobile service isn't it?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:06:31 Yes it's very different. I guess the one thing in common is that there are wheels involved and you take materials but in this case you're taking materials to a stationary location. They're expecting you. Everyone is the same age. And it's a great opportunity for a service to those communities to families that both caregivers or work or it's a single parent home and so they don't have time to take their child to the library. And I really believe that that one on one experience with an individual hearing and seeing pictures can be such a transformative experience I think not only for that child but when the child then is able to take materials home for grandma or their big sister or brother.

Ken Harvey: 00:07:38 Well so I think I may have cut you off when you were starting that story because I think you were about to say something about at the time of your story happening you had a child at home.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:07:49 Yes I had a one year old who was actually in child care and because I was a librarian and my husband was a teacher we did a lot of different kinds of pre-reading kinds of activities. But I also knew many of my friends in a similar situation just didn't have that opportunity.

Ken Harvey: 00:08:18 So I know that this area of the library service is really important to you because we've talked about it over the years and you reminded me once about how important it is for children to really learn to read and learn to love to read early in their lives. And would you like to share that with the audience about that?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:08:42 Sure. A long time ago I took a class from a gentleman by the name of Spencer Shaw and he specialized in children's literature and he was an incredible instructor at the University of

Washington. And I'm sure if there are any librarians listening right now they will go "Oh yeah, Spencer Shaw." And I was so taken with his description of the use of language and how children respond to hearing words, excuse me, and hearing poetry and rhyme. And I then could sort of think back and my own experience as a child and being read to constantly and watching my parents read. And just at the time I just thought well that was what big people did, they read and I wanted to be a big person too.

Ken Harvey: 00:10:02 And you had all also mentioned to me that there's really something bad can happen that helps ensure or really lay the groundwork for a child being more successful in life if they learn to read and master many of those skills before kindergarten and then they can really kind of move forward in those first three years of elementary school.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:10:27 Exactly exactly. And I think there's a lot of research right now about a child's success often being dependent upon what their reading ability is by third grade. And it's so much harder for children after third grade to really catch up with their peers and to be able to enjoy school and find school to be fun and not a challenge. And I believe that by just providing those opportunities to get familiar with books, even as simple as being sure that when a child picks up a book they know which side to hold up and just kind of moving forward from that place.

Ken Harvey: 00:11:16 Wow. So are there some other areas that you're just really just thrilled with that the library's been involved in or?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:11:27 Sure. One of the things that I started to do when I became Assistant Director was to work on building projects and I really hadn't worked on any building projects before I was hired for that position and what I didn't think ahead of time was how much I would enjoy that work. And I enjoy seeing the buildings appear and serve their communities. But I think what I enjoy most of all was the opportunity to get to know community members during that process. So starting out perhaps with a group of 8-10 people that I'm just getting to know and by the end two or three years later feeling as if I've just added members of my family. And I'd love to go back to those libraries and just talk to folks that were involved in those projects. The Freeland Library is a great example of where I began working with a group of volunteers, friends who actually raised enough funds to purchase the land for the library and to build the library.

Ken Harvey: 00:12:51 Wow.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:12:52 And I still have pretty deep roots in that community. In Coupeville that was an early project as well. And that project was very much dependent upon a man by the name of Lou Nati and he was the mayor of that community. And he took it on himself to make sure that his community had a library that would not only serve them immediately but would serve them for a number of years and he was just a delight to work with.

Ken Harvey: 00:13:27 He sounds like a local hero.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:13:29 He was, he was definitely a local hero.

Ken Harvey: 00:13:32 Wow. Well we will have the show notes page from this podcast a list of some of the building projects that you've been involved in.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:13:41 Oh great.

Ken Harvey: 00:13:41 So listeners who are interested in knowing more will have an opportunity to see that information. And I just want to remind the audience that we are chatting with Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory who is the outgoing Executive Director for Sno-Isle Libraries. Jonalyn your early years what age were you when you decided that you wanted to be a librarian? Was this like, were you four or five years old or was it more like a teenager or young adult or?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:14:14 Well I didn't start out wanting to be a librarian and I think if you had asked any of my teachers or even the librarian at the school the last thing they would have thought of as me being a librarian. I'm trying to remember her name, I can't remember her name off the top of my head but my guess is that four or five times a week she was asking me to leave the library because I was just having too much fun with my friends and I'm sure it was just talking about books and we were so excited about it.

Ken Harvey: 00:14:54 So just for the sake of our listeners you didn't say leave the library. L-E-A-V-E.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:15:04 That's right. That's exactly it. So I never even as a small kid I guess, I never was one of those folks who responded all that well to the shushing theory of libraries. So I didn't grow up thinking I wanted to be a librarian. I did grow up thinking that I wanted to be involved with something about ideas and that I wanted to be independent in my life. And I grew up in a really small community and I loved the comfort, kind of the coziness of knowing everyone in my community but at the same time I

really wanted to just find new ideas and to be able to do that in an independent way and the career of librarianship has really given me that ability to do that.

- Ken Harvey: 00:16:10 Well let's talk a little bit about where you grew up because I think it's fascinating. I think the name of the community is Deming, Deming Washington.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:16:21 That's correct. That's right.
- Ken Harvey: 00:16:22 And it's located.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:16:24 On the way to Mount Baker. So it's a little east of Bellingham. And I grew up on my family's farm. So my great grandparents homesteaded.
- Ken Harvey: 00:16:37 And before you get too far just for listeners who may not really know the North, exactly where Mount Baker is or Deming let me just say that if you look on a map of the state of Washington and you look at the Canadian border, U.S. Canadian border, Deming is just like maybe almost like the width of a hair below the border. It's right up on the north edge of the state isn't it?
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:17:10 It's pretty close. If you had to go via highway then it's a bit of a distance but if you could just get into an air balloon and pop over the foothills you would be in B.C. pretty quickly.
- Ken Harvey: 00:17:25 Yeah. So if you described the community it's rural farming and kind of a small townish?
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:17:36 So Deming itself is really so small. And it was small then that it wasn't a town, it was an unincorporated area and it was the home of a consolidated school district. The folks who lived there was a combination of farmers and loggers. And I would say there were maybe six or seven families like my own who had come to the area in the late 1800s and at least some of their children had decided to stay.
- Ken Harvey: 00:18:18 So you actually grew up in the home of one of the most influential members of the community as I understand.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:18:27 Well I like to think so. I was really lucky. I grew up most of my life right next door to my grandmother. And she had been an English teacher before she was married and she just loved to spend time with me.
- Ken Harvey: 00:18:50 Aw, that's sweet.

- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:18:50 And at the time I just accepted it. But now that I have my own grandchildren I completely get it. And so I spent just about every afternoon with my grandmother. We spent a lot of time reading but also gardening and gardening on a farm is a bit different than gardening in your backyard. There's a definite purpose for it. It's not-
- Ken Harvey: 00:19:24 It's not for decoration.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:19:25 Well yeah it's not just for fresh lettuce but you're growing specific things in order for them to be preserved or canned. But with my grandmother she just loved a pretty garden. And every year she would draw out where the garden and how it would be. And she had this perfect handwriting. And so there'd be a line where the beans were and then next to that whatever happened and she saved those garden maps every year and she would pull out the previous year's map and look at that.
- Ken Harvey: 00:20:08 So when you say perfect handwriting you mean curtsy handwriting.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:20:11 Oh yeah. So-
- Ken Harvey: 00:20:12 Not printing or block letters or anything.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:20:14 Yeah no printing allowed. And my grandma she had this really competitive spirit and it only came out very rarely and one of the things that she was most proud of were peas. Growing peas. And you plant peas, excuse me, in February around Washington's Birthday and so you want those peas to get up and growing. But then you want to be sure that you can pick and freeze more peas than anybody else in your neighborhood. And so this one year she and I were working along and we had to that point had maybe like 48 pints or something and just imagine little peas, 48 pints of little peas and I casually mentioned to her that I had saw Mrs. Easterbrook a couple of days before and she had mentioned that she was taking care of peas as well. And well it came up that Mrs. Easterbrook had a few more a few more pints and so I'll be darned we watered our peas a little bit more and we moved up and probably had maybe 58 or 59 pints.
- Ken Harvey: 00:21:36 A little competition there?
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:21:38 A little competition.

Ken Harvey: 00:21:39 Well that's fun. So another kind of celebrity in the community was your dad.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:21:46 Yes. Yeah. His name was Harold and he and my mother had met when they are both in the service during World War II. And then my mother brought him back home with her and made sure that he was a good fit with her family. And so this big city guy from Philadelphia became a farmer and a postmaster.

Ken Harvey: 00:22:18 A postmaster.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:22:19 And a postmaster. And I think I was chatting with you the other day about this Ken and the idea of post offices and public libraries. And at least the rural post offices and the post office that I grew up and the community of postmasters very much like the community of public libraries and the community of librarians a real dedication to the community and serving their community. And as soon as I started working in a community library it just hit me that similarity.

Ken Harvey: 00:23:04 So you've told me some stories of your being in the post office with your dad and watching him go through his duties and serving the community. And do you have any story that kind of comes to mind as we're just kind of sitting here? Or if it's not even a complete story, just what that was like.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:23:29 So before I went to elementary school, kindergarten didn't exist out in the wilderness. So we had first grade. So I would stay with my grandmother in the afternoon but every morning I went to work with my mom and dad because my mom actually worked there as well. So I was there up until about noon or so. So I would experience this phenomena of the route driver driving up to the back door, the back door would burst open. They'd pull in these mail bags and the goal was to unpack these mail bags so the mail could get as sorted and into the boxes as quickly as possible. And I watched that happen every day and I often thought well there's an extra bag today what's going to happen with that. And so that would happen all year round.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:24:40 But it especially got a little bit more intense around holiday time. There was just a lot more mail kinds of things; your packages, your Christmas gifts. And so they would always be people outside in the lobby waiting for their packages. And this one Christmas Eve there had been a family that had been waiting and waiting for these packages from Germany and it didn't come, it didn't come. And the package came on the second delivery that day and the route had already gone out. So my dad, it was maybe about 4:30 or so, the office was just

about ready to close. He loaded up the packages to this particular family-

Ken Harvey: 00:25:32

Because he knew they were waiting for it.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:25:35

He knew they were waiting. And it was on the Mount Baker highway so I'm thinking the weather was probably a little gnarly and he drove out, delivered the packages and then came home and then we started our own holiday. And that wasn't really treated like a big deal. That was just part of his job and I have seen that happen time again in our own community libraries where-

Ken Harvey: 00:26:08

Because it was really above and beyond.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:26:13

I think looking back on it probably was and I don't know how often that would happen now but it surely happens in our Darrington Library where one of our staff members will know that Sally has been waiting for a book to come in and it has come in on a Saturday, the library's not going to open till Monday and the staff member gives that person a call and says "Hey your book is in. How about if I drop it off on my way home?" And I guess she could look at that as beyond the call of duty. But for me it just is an example of how connected our community libraries are to their residents.

Ken Harvey: 00:27:07

Well Thanks for sharing that because I think that sometimes in our society we can get really fixated on what is my job, how strictly should that be defined and I'll go up to that line but no further than that because I'm not getting paid for any more than that so why should I do more than that. But like you said there is something about feeling like there's a higher calling aspect to the work that we do regardless of whether it's in libraries or post offices or other occupations where thinking about who is it we're really trying to serve, what's the bigger ideal here and what can I do to do that. That really breathes nobility into almost any job that we can do.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:28:03

I definitely think that's the case and we have staff who deliver direct service every day but we also have a large number of staff who are at our Administrative Center who work really hard and focused on making sure that when a new delivery of new materials comes in our back door that we can get them out to the public as fast as we can. So they're not idly sitting at our Service Center and we'll get to them when we feel like it. We know that folks really want to read the latest such and such.

- Ken Harvey: 00:28:48 Well and I know that we hear from customers all the time who appreciate not having to wait very long for the popular title or the latest title that they've been looking for from a specific author or if it's a latest movie title that's just been released by studios, getting it on DVD or whatever it is. People enjoy getting those materials in their hands quickly.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:29:14 Exactly.
- Ken Harvey: 00:29:16 So I just happen to know too that early on as you were just starting out as a professional and I just say maybe starting out working you spent a little bit of time in Japan.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:29:31 I did and it really wasn't connected at all to libraries. I had decided I wanted to be a librarian and had gone to graduate school and then also at the same time I had a number of friends that were exchange students and kind of coming back to that comment that I made a little bit ago about this idea of ideas and independence and I was just very intrigued with going to another culture and learning things just I had a wonderful opportunity to do that and to I think even to make me really appreciate public libraries here. Many other countries have public libraries, some don't but many do. But there are very few that have public libraries in the way that the United States has public libraries. And thinking back to public libraries in the 1800s in the Northeast when so many immigrants coming into the country not speaking English but really focused on finding a better life for them. And the public library I think was really instrumental in helping people learn skills and to be able to become Americans.
- Ken Harvey: 00:31:14 Well I think sometimes we take for granted what we seem to be born with that having a free lending library is available to us and we think the library it's always been there, it'll always be there. But individuals who come from other places sometimes will appreciate what America offers even more than Americans, natural born feel because we just again we just take it for granted. And I remember talking to someone that I met through TEDx event organizing, an organizer from Tunisia who was talking to me about the way it is in his country and that he did not have the opportunity of enjoying a public library and so he was really fascinated that an organization like Sno-Isle Libraries would be involved in TEDx in some way. But it just really struck me and reminded me that gosh public libraries are really important institutions and even they're really important ideas that have been fought for and provided in our country and we ought not to take it for granted.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:32:54 Exactly. It's hard for me to really picture how as a country we can continue to evolve, learn more about the world if we don't have access to information available for everyone. Not just for those of us that could belong to the Book of the Month Club but for everyone. And how I believe public libraries have changed over the years to stay relevant and to keep that information available. And I think our experience with TEDx is a great example of that. In a sense our TEDx events really were a way for us to provide a library service which I believe is information to folks without walls. And the idea that sometimes information becomes the most useful when there is a context for it. So a list of facts in my mind, they are just a list of facts until there is that curation of bringing that information together into what I consider to be a concept or a thought process that connects things together and then gives each of us an opportunity to go "Oh. Huh. I hadn't really thought of it that way" or "I didn't realize that this occurrence over here really has affected how something else is happening elsewhere." And I think TEDx really allowed us to open our doors to a bigger audience and to folks who maybe need a different way of receiving information.

Ken Harvey: 00:35:18 Well we are chatting with Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory who is the outgoing Executive Director for Sno-Isle Libraries. And Jonalyn certainly with the work, your support of the TEDxSnoIsleLibraries effort you've been involved in helping spread information and ideas and with some of our speakers now they've had over a million views of some of their talks and others hundreds of thousands of times and that seems really remarkable because it really gave in some ways a worldwide platform to local thought leaders and innovators and some otherwise ordinary citizens who have been thinking some great things which I think is really remarkable. But I also wanted to just mention that something else that it seems like you ... I know that when I was first hired you spoke to me about something that Sno-Isle Libraries was doing and I think that you had a hand in making this happen. And you told me to take a hand in making it happen. And that was the issues that matters, forums and discussion panels and do you want to just talk a little bit about what your idea was behind that?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:36:47 Sure and I also need to really give credit to our foundation.

Ken Harvey: 00:36:52 The Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:36:55 The Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation. On their 10th year anniversary the President of the Foundation came up to me and said we want to do something significant for the library and it doesn't have to be anything that another library has done but

we really want it to be significant and we want you to tell us what that should be. And we will provide financial support for that. And gosh we all like to hear that there's some financial support available for something that we think is important. And so I proposed to the foundation this idea of having community discussions around important things, around things that matter. And so that's been going on for a number of years and I think this past year it has been the most successful. And a number of different-

Ken Harvey: 00:38:03 That means an overnight success.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:38:06 That's it exactly, that's exactly. Where we had multiple events over the year. And I think our staff really hit on it where this past year they really decided OK let's focus on an area that our communities have identified as important. And then let's have a series about that. And so this past year a lot of focus on mental health issues, teen suicide and we're able to partner with a number of different organizations and I think one of our strongest partners through that process was Compass Health.

Ken Harvey: 00:38:52 Yes.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:38:52 And we got to know a lot more about Compass Health and I think they were able to learn a lot about public libraries as well. And that's an organization that serves many counties and also serves counties where there are other library districts in them. And I think that was just a really good partnership between the two of us.

Ken Harvey: 00:39:25 Well we really appreciate organizations like the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation and Compass Health and I think there's Snohomish kind of leader ... I think it's Snohomish ...

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:39:40 Leadership Snohomish County.

Ken Harvey: 00:39:43 Leadership Snohomish. And other groups that have been working for kind of the health and well-being, economic well-being and healthy communities and vibrant communities. And I think that it's just really remarkable that these innovative programs and events that have happened have been on top of the library doing its core work. Lending, putting together, making collections of different types of materials available. Has that all been around some type of strategic plan or something that's built on some values or purposes of the library?

- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:40:26 Definitely and we've really had the good fortune through two planning cycles to have Kendra Trachta on our staff who has really helped work with our board of trustees in identifying priorities and priorities for a specific period of time. So really allowing us to focus for some results and then at the same time honoring our core services. So honoring the needs of our community for early learning, the needs of our students for homework support, the needs of our community members just to learn more about their surroundings. And the last six or seven years we've really been able to maintain those very important core services and at the same time put extra focus on some current needs that our communities have.
- Ken Harvey: 00:41:44 Yeah well you have served as the head, the lead person of a really dynamic organization. And I think sometimes people when they think of a public library or Sno-Isle Libraries they're thinking just of the library that's down on the corner of a certain street that may have 10 or 15 staff members who work there and maybe a bunch of individual volunteers from the community who volunteer some of their time there but Sno-Isle Libraries actually in some ways it's a community of community libraries.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:42:27 Exactly. And I'm really proud that we are a community of community libraries as compared to, excuse me, a library district that provides a very consistent type of service for each community regardless of what they need. I'm the most-
- Ken Harvey: 00:43:01 We're not a corporation that's just telling every community what to do.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:43:04 Exactly. So what really makes my heart swell up is when I'm at a meeting and I hear the Mayor introduce the Building Manager as their Community Librarian and I've definitely heard Mayor Nicola in Lynnwood introduce Michael Delury as Lynnwood's librarian. I mean really what could be better than that. For people to have these community connections.
- Ken Harvey: 00:43:43 Yeah well just for listeners who are wondering about kind of the size of Sno-Isle Libraries, we're serving two counties and the population base is three quarters of a million people. And we have hundreds of thousands of those individuals who are library customers and I think last count I saw there were like oh depending upon the time of year 450 to maybe 500 library positions, library staff.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:44:23 Exactly.

Ken Harvey: 00:44:23 And I think I've heard like 600 to 700 volunteers.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:44:28 Yes. And our volunteers that's a relatively recent adventure for us, probably within the last ten years. And I would like to say that all alone in my office one day I thought gee we should have volunteers here but really-

Ken Harvey: 00:44:51 It wasn't your idea?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:44:53 No but I've tried to claim it as much as I can. It really came about from going out, I've been in a number of community meetings asking people what they thought about the library, where they'd like the library to spend money, if they thought the library was using their resources effectively and time after time I kept hearing about volunteers. And it would start as "Do you have volunteers?" and I would say "Well currently we don't." "Well why don't you have volunteers?" And so after I heard that a number of times and really started thinking about it I talked to a staff member who's since retired, Nancy Patton, and we both just got really excited about the possibility of developing a network and the establishment of a volunteer program here. And it has been incredible.

Ken Harvey: 00:46:01 It sure has.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:46:03 Every year we have an annual volunteer recognition event. And so I've been at the event for a long time. And I always see a certain group of people that are there every year and then there'll be new people that will be there, maybe a 15 or 16 year old and often they show up with their mom and their dad and sometimes a grandparent and a little sister. And the family is so pleased about what their child is involved with. And it is a joy to see that connection between public libraries, community civic engagement. It's a treat.

Ken Harvey: 00:46:54 Well I will say to the audience that this event that Jonalyn is referring to is one that marks essentially kind of recognition of service for extraordinary commitments of service. And this event actually is one in which the President of the United States and the Governor of the state of Washington recognize individuals for their volunteer service. And so it is quite striking some of the stories of commitment and service that come from individuals who've given 100 hours up to 500 or more hours of service during a calendar year. And some of the individuals who have secured those awards just have heartwarming stories.

- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:47:47 They do, they do. So on Mondays here at the Service Center there's a retired woman who doesn't drive so she comes on the senior bus and she's brought every Monday. And she volunteers and I always see her as she's waiting to leave. And she's really quite an inspiration to me that she's getting herself here. It's not easy. She's not just jumping in a car and driving. And she loves to interact with the staff but also to feel a part of the community. And I look forward to seeing her every Monday because usually she's leaving at about the time that I go to lunch. So I have an opportunity for each of us to give each other a hug.
- Ken Harvey: 00:48:49 Well we want to just continue to let our volunteers know how much we appreciate them and their families for their commitment to serving their libraries and that service is so important as is the work of our staff. And we've got a very diverse and committed staff and you have been Jonalyn such a wonderful champion of our staff and the ideals of library that just continues to pull us forward. So I want to take maybe the last few minutes that we have and just talk a little bit about your being at the helm of this organization and you have kind of led us through times in which we've needed to go back to the community and ask for funding. And at times like that there sometimes are questions about well how well and how diligent is Sno-Isle Libraries in taking care of the funding that it receives currently from property owners who pay a library levy through their property tax. And there are things that I have found about you just from a kind of how you handle financial management. And I'll just say to the audience you're pretty conservative in the way you look at our finances.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:50:20 Yes and I think my political friends would go "Oh is she really?" But definitely I believe that we owe to our communities ... that we respect the funds that they provide to us. We don't take that for granted. For me I want to be sure that I'm treating it with at least as much care that I would treat my own money. I think we have a commitment to our community to sustain a solid library service. I think for us-
- Ken Harvey: 00:51:08 So is that stewardship?
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:51:09 Yes I think it's a combination of stewardship. I think it's also an important value that I think our board of trustees has which is to have consistent high level world class library service year after year. And in order to do that we need to plan ahead financially. And we need to really in a sense govern ourselves to be sure that we're building our organization in a way that's sustainable. And you had mentioned a little bit earlier Ken

about the number of staff that we have and we would not be able to sustain stable service if what we were doing is one year we had 500 staff members and then another year we had 300 staff members or one year we purchased 200,000 items and the next year because we didn't have any money left we purchased 100,000 items. We really need to manage those funds in a way that they're here not just for this year but they're here for next year.

- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:52:38 And this past I guess it was spring when we had an election to increase the library's revenue our communities came out and said "We support you. We understand that you're being careful with our funds and we can count on you to manage those funds over a long period of time and not come back to us and ask for funds more frequently than really is necessary." And I think questions to us from our communities about how we spend our money I think those are really reasonable and I believe that we owe it to our communities to be very transparent about how many funds we collect and how we spend that. And I don't take those questions as inappropriate or malicious-
- Ken Harvey: 00:53:59 Or intrusive.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:54:00 Or intrusive. I think it's completely logical. If folks are going to invest in their public library they should be able to expect that their public library is using those funds responsibly and willing to talk about that.
- Ken Harvey: 00:54:22 Well and I really appreciate that and the transparency and accountability that I've seen in this organization is pretty remarkable and it ought not to be remarkable. But I'd say it's remarkable and certainly something that I think that we have a lot of pride in. And I just want to invite listeners who may be based on this conversation interested in knowing more about how the library is funded. Please go to our Web site, sno-isle.org and search for funding and we've got information up on our Web site. And if you'd like more information just get in touch with us, let us know what you're looking for and we'll do our best to share that with you.
- Ken Harvey: 00:55:05 Hey in our final few minutes here maybe a little lighthearted few questions I've got for you. One is that you actually got your Bachelor's Degree from Washington State University.
- Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:55:22 Exactly. Go Cougs.

Ken Harvey: 00:55:24 Which makes you a cougar. However you got your Masters of Library Information Services at the University of Washington. So are you a purebred cougar or are you more mixed as a cougar/husky or who do you find is pulling for in the Apple Cup?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:55:51 I have never ever even thought about anyone winning the Apple Cup but the Cougs. And unfortunately they don't always win but to me that just demonstrates what real Cougar spirit is. We're hopeful. We look to the future. There's always a rainbow there and-

Ken Harvey: 00:56:27 Even if you can't find the gold at the end of it?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:56:30 No it doesn't matter because we know in our heart that there's no comparison. There's absolutely no comparison to being a Washington State graduate. I'm from this huge cougar family. My granddad, my mother, myself, one of my sons. So it would be a travesty. It would be simply a travesty if my family was to hear me say that "Well I'm a little bit of both." I'm really grateful to the University of Washington because it's really due to that institution that I've been able to be a librarian and have this career that is wonderful. My goal for my children and my goal for myself has always been to find a job that I like and that they like, that they can go to work and feel that they're accomplishing something. And someone had said something to me yesterday about "Gee there's not much time left."

Ken Harvey: 00:57:59 Before retirement?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:58:00 Before retirement. And I said "Yes but every day counts." And I really do feel that way.

Ken Harvey: 00:58:07 So I thought you were going to take the advantage of me saying "No pot of gold at the end of the rainbow for cougars" to say "Oh but there is a pot of Cougar Gold."

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:58:17 That's exactly, exactly. In fact I have a can of that in my refrigerator right now.

Ken Harvey: 00:58:23 So you want to just explain to the audience what Cougar Gold is?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:58:26 Sure, it's an incredible cheese that's made at Washington State University. And Washington state has this really impressive-

Ken Harvey: 00:58:38 Is it a dairy science program?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:58:39 It's a dairy. Yeah a really impressive food, animal husbandry, I have a hard time with that word, program. And I think it does allow for people to make a few jokes when they walk around campus. And they might drive by the dairy. But I think that's pretty fabulous myself.

Ken Harvey: 00:59:13 Pot of Cougar Gold at the end of the rainbow.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 00:59:15 That's right.

Ken Harvey: 00:59:16 So we've been talking with Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory, our Executive Director who is gonna be retiring from us soon. And Jonalyn and I had talked about maybe some questions to avoid for this podcast. And we both agreed that we would stay away from her favorite books because there are actually so many for her but she has the same reaction to that question that I do when someone says "Where do you want to go eat?" And my mind just goes blank because I don't want to offend anyone. And I don't want to impose my own ... Well the things that I really love and the things I don't love. So we're going to avoid those two questions for this podcast and just invite our listeners to check out our Web site where we've got a number of reading lists available from our librarians of just great things that are out there to read and we also have reader recommendations where people who are our customers are telling us what they enjoy and that maybe you'll enjoy too.

Ken Harvey: 01:00:28 So Jonalyn thank you so much for taking the time to do this. We just barely touched the surface of so many things we could have talked about.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 01:00:36 Well thank you very much and I think I will regret if I don't just make a comment about that I'm leaving on November 30th and the first Monday of December a brand new executive director is coming on board. And Lois is a wonderful person and she is coming from Hennepin County Library District which is held up very high nationally and she's looking forward to-

Ken Harvey: 01:01:11 In Minnesota right?

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 01:01:12 In Minnesota. And I think that those of us who are from the Pacific Northwest and those folks who are from Minnesota and Iowa I think there's a similar I think approach to nice and definitely Lois brings Minnesota nice with her and I just encourage everyone to make the opportunity to get to know Lois.

Ken Harvey: 01:01:42 So it sounds like you think that there are good things ahead for Sno-Isle Libraries.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 01:01:46 I do. Exactly.

Ken Harvey: 01:01:49 Well we appreciate your service to this region. And I just want to note that you have been recognized for that service from several organizations over the last year. And I think that those recognitions that we'll list on our show notes page are well deserved.

Jonalyn Woolf-Ivory: 01:02:08 Thank you very much.

Abe Martinez: 01:02:10 Hey parents and grandparents. Is there a child in the family who's latched on to a smartphone or tablet computer? Help them put that screen time to good use by downloading fun and educational magazines from Sno-Isle Libraries like Highlights, High Five and American Girl. Every magazine packed with age appropriate content like crafts, quizzes, experiments, poems and wholesome stories. And each issue is free to download with a library card from Sno-Isle Libraries.

Speaker 2: 01:02:40 The Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation would like to thank the generous organizations and sponsors who help mobilize people and resources to expand the reach of Sno-Isle Library Services, promote civic engagement and foster a lifetime of learning. Our special thanks go to Baker and Taylor, BrainFuse, Coastal Community Bank, EBSCO Information Services, Gale Cengage Learning, Midwest Tape and Overdrive.

Abe Martinez: 01:03:11 So the other day I walked into my local communities Sno-Isle Library and asked where I could find romance. Maybe I should explain. You see I'm wondering about Sno-Isle Library's collection of romance novels and how it reflects the current demand for such books in the culture. I'm also wondering about the background of this genre. Like what defines a romance novel, what's its history and how did these books get to be so popular. Well it turns out a librarian is just the person to ask. In fact Sno-Isle has what I would call an expert on the subject who was able to answer all my questions.

Jackie Parker: 01:03:55 I am Jackie Parker, the Lead Librarian for Reader Services.

Abe Martinez: 01:04:00 It turns out that Jackie has done a good bit of research on modern romance novels and their place in today's public library collections.

Jackie Parker: 01:04:08 Romance readers buy more books than anybody else. They read more than anybody else and they still use the library as their number one source for books.

Abe Martinez: 01:04:20 So as you might expect Sno-Isle has a very large collection of romance fiction in a variety of media formats.

Jackie Parker: 01:04:28 We do. It's not always easy to find. We have a little sticker but there's no one section in the library to go because romance everyone likes it, everyone deserves love. You'll find it in all different genres.

Abe Martinez: 01:04:43 In other words romance novels are wildly popular but can be hard to categorize in a library. Part of the problem is figuring out just what counts as a romance novel. Most publishing sources say that a work of fiction qualifies as a romance so long as it has these two elements, a central love story and an emotionally satisfying optimistic ending. That's it. The rest is up to the author. And the audience.

Abe Martinez: 01:05:13 Now this simple formula dates back to the earliest days of storytelling but the modern romance novel, the kind that appeals to the mass market can actually be understood in large part by reading the classic works of Jane Austen. Seriously.

Jackie Parker: 01:05:30 So one thing that's really fun about Jane Austen in particular is she did, if not create, she definitely solidified in our minds the perfect romance. And what you see from Jane Austen are a lot of what we would call tropes today.

Abe Martinez: 01:05:49 Those tropes or common storylines have been used again and again ever since, churned out in countless ways to readers who can't seem to get enough. In fact that demand for new material is actually one of the unique advantages of the romance genre.

Jackie Parker: 01:06:06 The demand is so high that the pace is faster and that means it's more responsive to the cultural conversation. So you're seeing more issues, the issues of like consent covered more in romance than I see it in general literature.

Abe Martinez: 01:06:26 And since romance must as a rule have a happy ending this engagement with the culture and the readers can be a very healthy thing.

Jackie Parker: 01:06:35 While the road that the characters travel is bumpy it's still really optimistic. And just like there's value in youth reading books about hard subjects so that they're better prepared when they

encounter them in real life, romance can provide a similar safe environment for exploration in relationships, healthy relationships.

- Abe Martinez: 01:07:00 The romance genre has a rich history. Lots of variety in both style and quality and a really dedicated fan base. And since Sno-Isle Libraries is committed to serving its customers and communities you can be sure that romance novels will be part of their collections available to you when and if you want to check one out for yourself. For Sno-Isle Libraries I'm Abe Martinez.
- Speaker 7: 01:07:31 If you have a great library experience you'd like to share with us we would love to know about it. Drop us a line at checkitoutpodcast@Sno-Isle.org. Again that's [@checkitoutpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/checkitoutpodcast), all one word, [@Sno-Isle.org](https://www.instagram.com/Sno-Isle.org). Who knows, we might even invite you to share your story on a future podcast.
- Speaker 7: 01:07:53 Thank you for listening to the Check It Out! Podcast. For free resources and materials connected to today's guest and topic head over to the library's Web site and search for the word podcast. The library's Web site is [Sno-Isle.org/podcast](https://www.sno-isle.org/podcast).
- Speaker 8: 01:08:09 When you give to the Sno-Isle libraries Foundation your gift touches generations. Your donation helps turn babies and young children into readers, turn students and first time entrepreneurs into successes and helps maintain the lifelong learning of adults, seniors and our home bound neighbors. You can be part of the change you're looking for. Your one time gift, monthly gift or memorial gift can make all the difference. Please consider investing in children, seniors and others through the Sno-Isle Libraries Foundation today.