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How Did We Get Here? A Brief Look at the History of Idaho Libraries

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A Brief Look at the History of Idaho Libraries

Idaho Library Association Conference

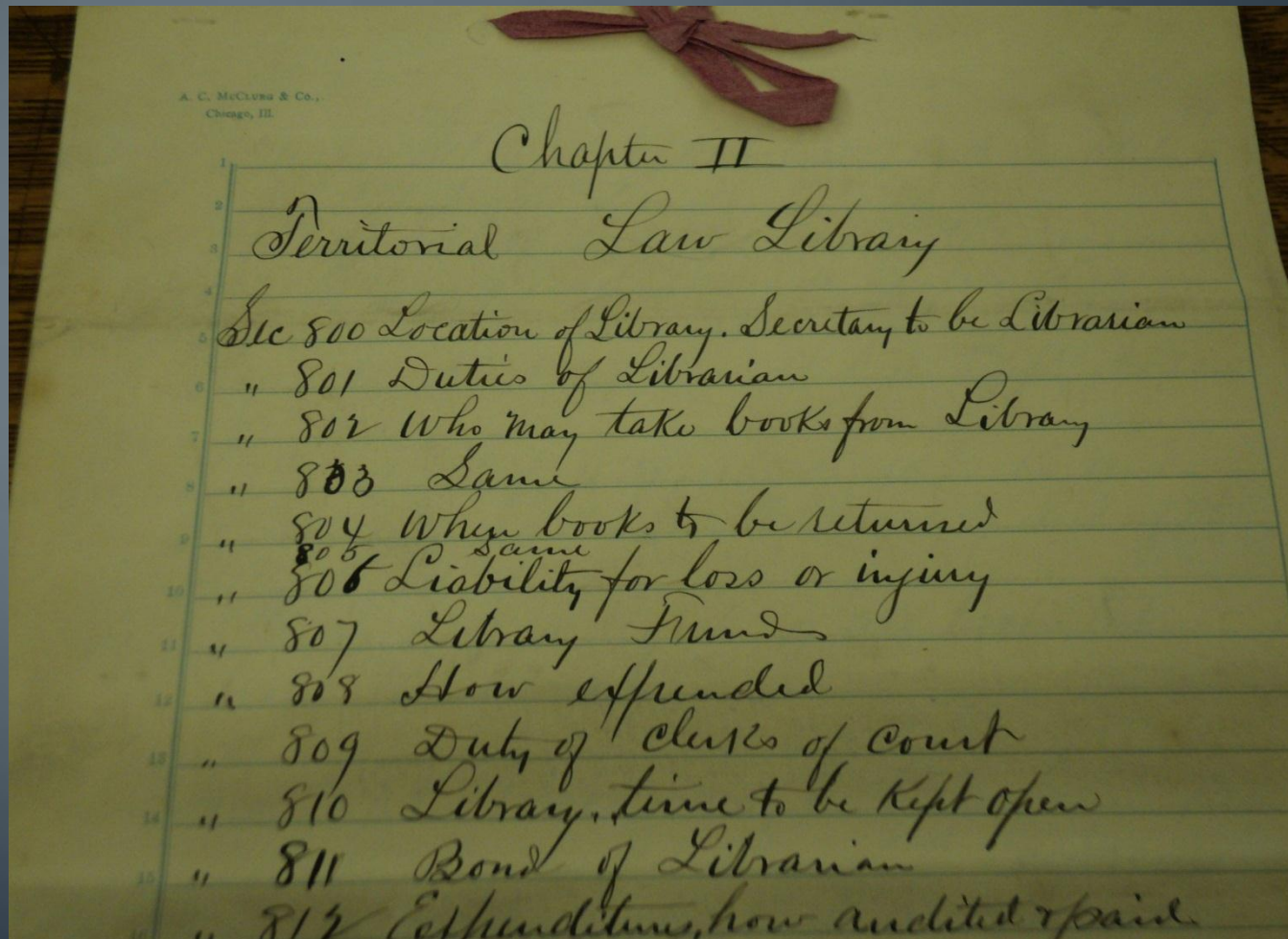
Julia Stringfellow

October 5, 2012



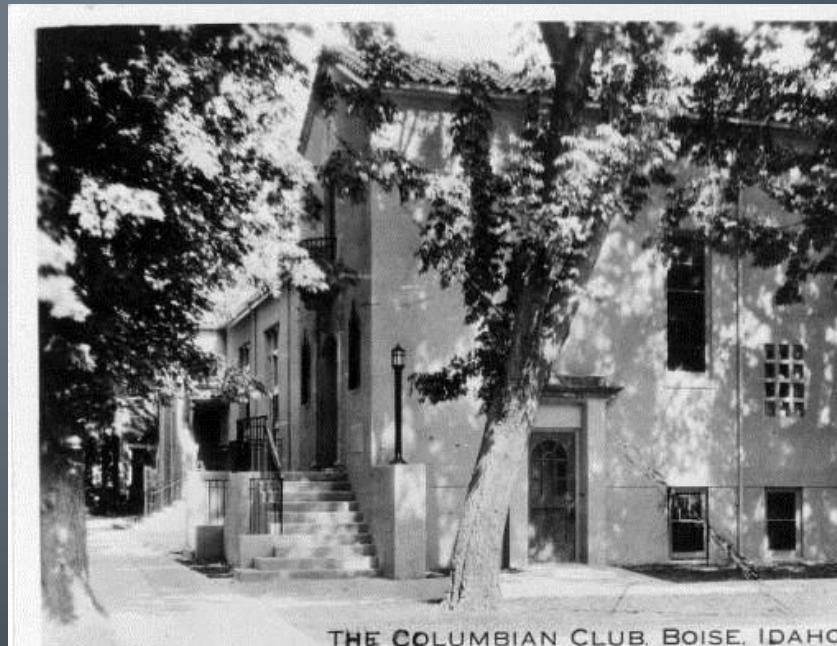
Idaho Territorial Law Library

- First library designated as the Idaho State Library.
- Established in 1869.



The Traveling Library

- 1890 statehood population: 88,500 people.
- Formed by the Columbian Club of Boise in 1899.
- Brought culture and education to 51 settlements in Idaho territory.
- “This system of disseminating literature is one of the best things ever established in Idaho.” *Idaho Statesman* article, March 7, 1903.



THE COLUMBIAN CLUB, BOISE, IDAHO

Idaho State Library Founding, 1901

- Founded during 1901 Idaho Legislative Session.
- Created with an annual operating budget of \$3,000.
- Columbian Club turned over library to the new State Library.



Senate Bill 7, 1901



Idaho's Carnegie Libraries

- By the 1920s, every major city in Idaho and many smaller communities boasted a library.
- Ten of those were built with Carnegie grants between 1903 and 1914: Boise, Caldwell, Idaho Falls, Lewiston, Moscow, Mountain Home, Nampa, Pocatello, Preston, and Wallace.



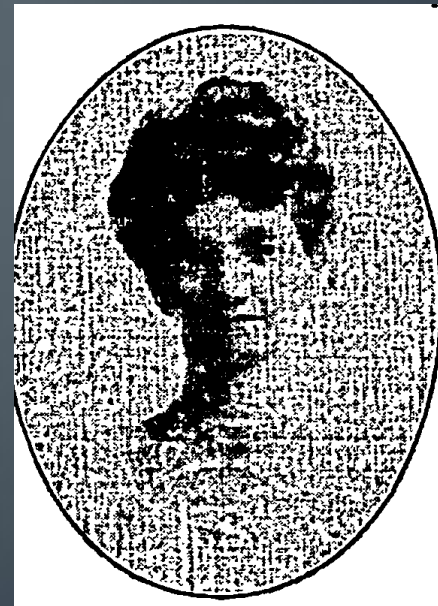
Eva Dockery, State Librarian 1901-1903

- Member of Columbian Club that launched traveling library.
- Reporter and Society Editor for the *Idaho Statesman* for over 30 years.
- “Something of a social arbiter for the capital city”



Serena Belle Chamberlain, State Librarian 1903-1905

- Salary was \$50 per month.
- One of Idaho's first women to serve as state school superintendent.
- Taught at Boise Central School.
- Part of Boise's high society, name appears frequently in Society page of *Idaho Statesman*.
- Extensive traveler.



State Librarians Chamberlain and Johnson make front
page of *Idaho Statesman* May 27, 1907

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DEATH IN THE SNAKE RIVER

State Superintendent Belle Chamberlain and State Librarian Louise
Johnson Have Thrilling Experience Above Shoshone
Falls—Cable of Ferry Boat Breaks.

(Special Dispatch)

TWIN FALLS, IDA., May 26.—Adrift in a disabled ferry boat in the swift rushing waters of the Snake river, Miss S. Belle Chamberlain, State Superintendent of public instruction, and Miss Louise Johnson, state librarian, were yesterday snatched from the jaws of death when almost on the brink of the Shoshone falls. The women were crossing the river with I. B. Todd of Chicago and H. M. Hebden of Boston when the cable snapped, leaving the boat helpless in midstream. The man in charge of the ferry boat was inexperienced and lost his head and only for the presence of mind of the two men in the party the ferry boat might have gone over the falls. But both Todd and Hebden caught the shore end of the cable before the ferry was away from it and locked it about the beams on the boat. This held the boat fast as the ferry tugged in the swishing waters. For fully 30 minutes the party battled with the swift waters of the raging stream. A man on the bank began to slowly pull the ferry to shore and with the assistance of the two men on board the boat was worked to within a short distance of the bank when the two women were put into a skiff and sent to the bank in safety. A short time later the men landed and hauled the ferry to where the team could be unloaded. The party had visited the falls and were crossing the river to visit Blue Lakes when the accident occurred.

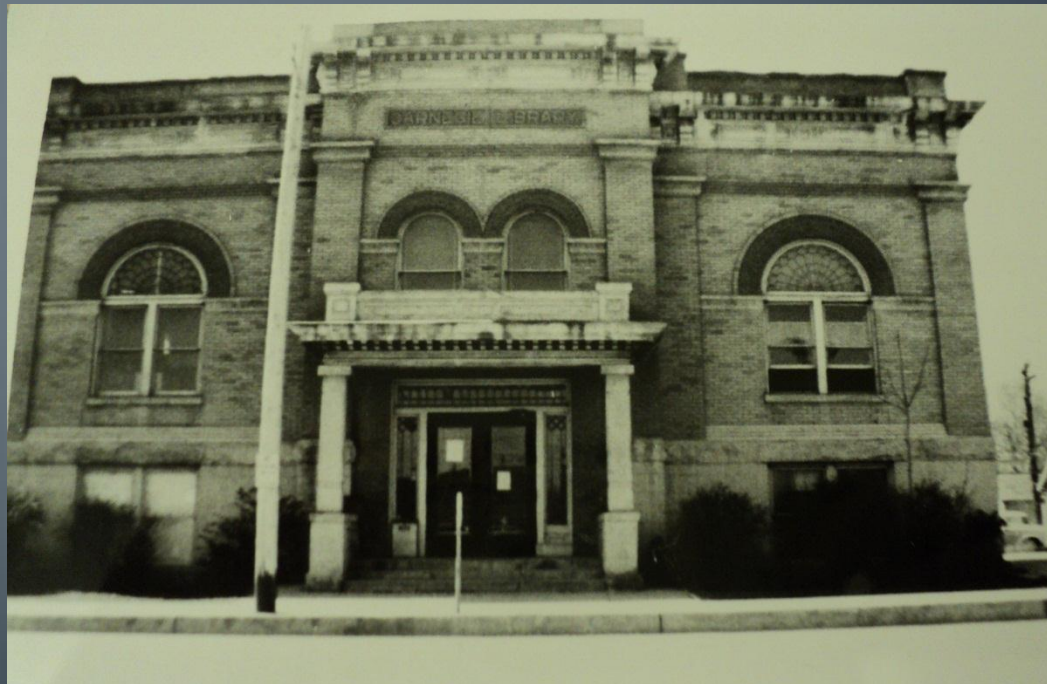
Margaret Stevenson Roberts, State Librarian 1905-1907

- First term as State Librarian.
- Started at Idaho State Library in 1903.
- ‘Petticoat governor of Idaho’



Idaho in 1910

- State population: 326,000 residents.
- Tax-supported public libraries had been established in 12 cities.
- Nearly every school district had a school library.
- Idaho State Library had over 12,400 volumes.



E. Louise Johnson, State Librarian 1908-1910

- Salary was \$50 per month.
- Travelled throughout Idaho visiting library stations and promoting library services.
- 158 library stations in the state traveling library.



Margaret Stevenson Roberts, State Librarian 1911-1917

- Second term as State Librarian.
- Expanded Free Traveling Library System.
- Created a single loan system in 1914.
- Established the Idaho State Library Association in 1915.



Marie M. Schreiber, State Librarian 1917-1919

- Chose to be State Librarian when Democrats won election in 1917.
- Traveling library supplied 234 stations with cases.
- Created route map for state traveling library.
- During World War I, gathered thousands of books and shipped them to soldiers overseas.



Idaho Statesman, August 10 and September 18, 1917

TRAVELING LIBRARY TO KEEP TROOPS POSTED

Will Distribute Books and Magazines
Among the Men Who Go
to Front.

Books will be received by the state traveling library at Boise for distribution among the men with the colors in the different camps in both Europe and the United States, Mrs. Marie Schreiber, state librarian, has announced.

Magazines are wanted, too, but they must not be musty from age. The American, Harper's, Century, Scientific American, Saturday Evening Post and other standard periodicals of recent vintage are desired for the fellows in khaki.

The books and magazines will be distributed under the direction of the American Library association. Idaho people wishing to contribute to the stack of reading matter that will be gathered may send them direct to Mrs. Schreiber at the statehouse.

NEED MORE BOOKS. FOR OUR SOLDIERS

Good Literature Cheers Many
Lonely Hours in Camp
and Hospitals.

Mrs. Marie Schreiber, librarian of the free traveling library, is in receipt of requests from the government of more books for soldiers, and she urges that any who have books to give will leave them at her office in the statehouse.

The report of the library war fund of \$1,700,000 which was collected last spring has been issued. With this money 36 camp library buildings have been erected, 117 librarians are now in the field, 464 camps, stations and vessels served, 109,403 selected books have been sent overseas and 300,000 purchased. These latter have been largely technical books.

To stations and camps in this country there have been sent 1,348,000 gift books.

It is in the army hospitals that the books are particularly welcome. It has taxed the ingenuity of librarians to minister to the sick when the camp libraries are five miles from the base hospital. One librarian writes of her experiences as follows:

Margaret Stevenson Roberts, State Librarian 1919-1933

- Third term as State Librarian.
- Salary was \$125 a month.
- 118 library stations using the traveling library.
- Over 4,000 borrowers were using the single loan system.
- Idaho population in 1930: over 445,000 residents.



Lalla Bedford, State Librarian 1933-1939

- Librarian at Caldwell Carnegie Library 1914-1919 and 1930-1932.
- Catalogued over 14,000 books and began use of Dewey Decimal System and card catalog at Idaho State Library.
- President of ILA 1933-1934.
- Wrote library development plan for Idaho.



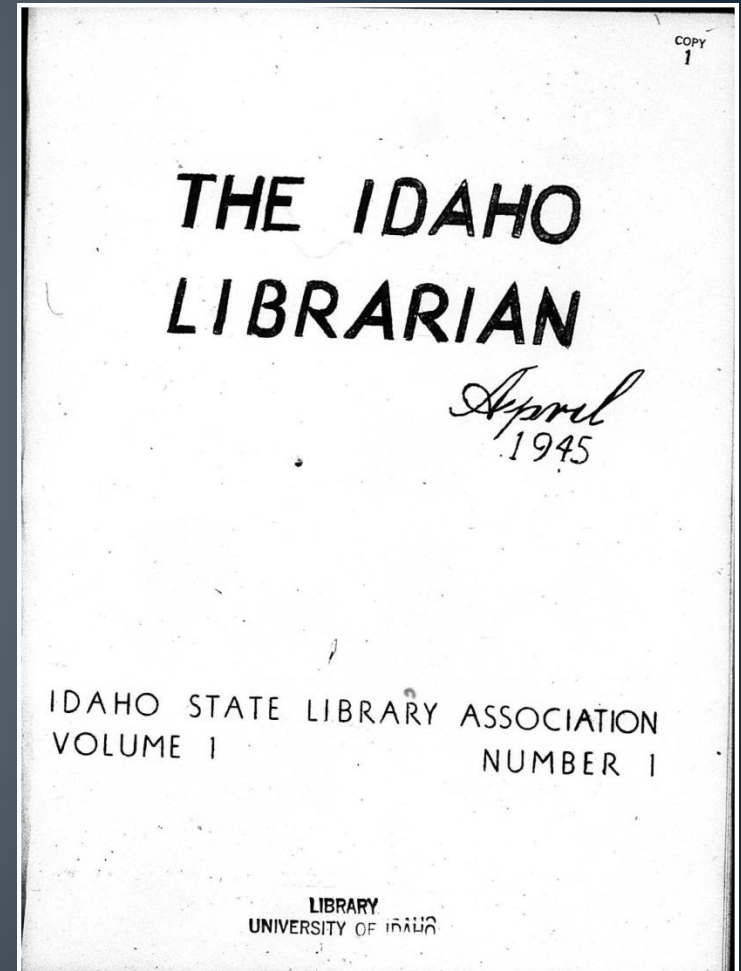
Walter Lockwood, State Librarian 1939-1942

- Began library career as a page at Boise Public Library.
- Professionally trained librarian.
- Oversaw Idaho's first library education program that began in 1938 under Bedford.
- Budget cut by 33% and staff cut in 1939.



Brief State Librarians in the 1940s

- Grace MacDonald Bell, 1942-1943
- Mabel Jose Adamson, 1932-1944
- Zada Lea Wines, 1944-1947
- Idaho State Library was in a holding pattern during the 1940s.
- Budget cut to \$14,000 a year.
- Few books purchased.
- *Idaho Librarian* debuted in 1945.



Margaret Roberts, State Librarian 1947-1952

- Fourth term as State Librarian.
- Opened Book Shop and Loan Library in Boise.
- Historian at Idaho State Historical Society.
- Served in this role until death in 1952.



Idaho library system in 1950

- 1950 state population: 588,637 residents.
- Idaho State Library moved to the basement of the Idaho State Historical Society's Museum in Boise.
- Idaho State Library Association, now the Idaho Library Association, reorganized and actively worked on legislation.
- Issues of the *Idaho Librarian* resumed publication with Eli Oboler as editor.



Edith G. Robinson, State Librarian 1952-1957

- One of first women pioneer commercial photographers in Idaho.
- Idaho State Library now under the governance of the State Library Board of Trustees.
- First librarian in Idaho to receive state retirement benefits when she retired in 1963.



Eugene D. Hart, State Librarian 1957-1959

- First professionally trained state librarian since Walter Lockwood.
- State Library Board provided budget of \$35,000 to build library collection, buy films and projectors, and purchase the first library bookmobile.
- Idaho State Library Planning Committee created.
- *Library Gems*, State Library newsletter, started.



Henry T. Drennan, State Librarian 1959-1961

- “The reason for being of the state library agency is the development of public library services.” 1960.
- Wrote extensively on the un-served and underserved library populations in the country.
- Received ALA’s Lippincott Award in 1978 for his distinguished service to the profession.



Helen M. Miller, State Librarian 1962-1980

- Started scholarship program for new librarians.
- Depository for state documents was established.
- Worked on over 100 projects to build or remodel public library buildings in Idaho.
- “The librarian is the first step in informing decision-makers about the needs of the library.”



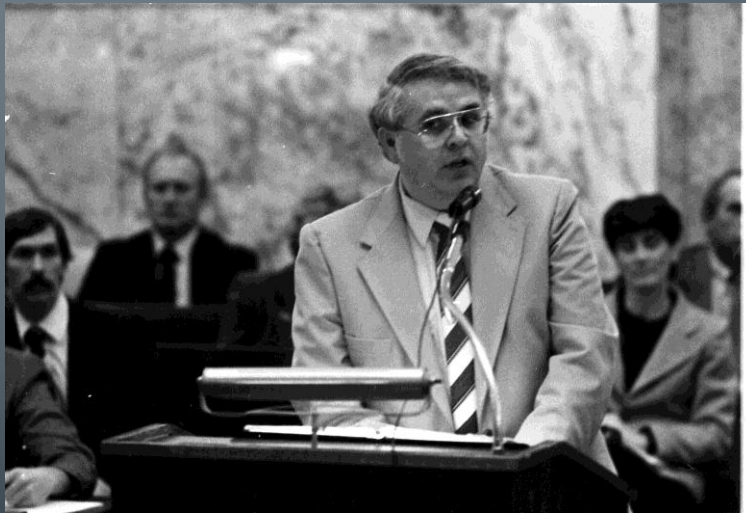
Milestones for Idaho Libraries in the 1970s



Charles A. Bolles

State Librarian 1980-2005

- Served longest uninterrupted term of any Idaho State Librarian.
- Travelled throughout state to visit libraries, meet their staff, and learn about the state library system.
- State Library reorganized in 1984.
- Served as Continuing Education Consultant after tenure as State Librarian.



Ann Joslin, State Librarian Since 2005

- ILA's Librarian of the Year, 1992 and 2003.
- Started at Idaho State Library in 1979.
- Worked with ISL's Library Development since it started in 1984.
- Idaho State Library became Idaho State Commission for Libraries on July 1, 2006.




Eli M. Oboler

“Champion of Intellectual Freedom”

- Head librarian of Idaho State University from 1949 until 1980.
- President of ILA, 1950-1953.
- Strongly opposed censorship.
- ALA award created in his honor, first given in 1986



Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award

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Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award

The Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award, which consists of \$500 and a certificate, is presented for the best published work in the area of intellectual freedom. The award was named for [Eli M. Oboler](#), the extensively published Idaho State University librarian known as a "champion of intellectual freedom who demanded the dismantling of all barriers to freedom of expression." Works to be considered for the award may be single articles (including review pieces), a series of thematically connected articles, books, or manuals published on the local, state or national level in English or English translation.

[Listing of past award recipients](#) | [2010 Oboler Award Press Release](#)

Sponsor and Deadline

The Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award is sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT) of the American Library Association (ALA). The deadline for the biennial award is December 1, of odd-numbered years (e.g., the deadline for the 2012 award will be December 1, 2011).

Nominations

Download the [Oboler nomination form](#) (PDF). Nominations and supporting evidence should be sent to: Bryan Campbell, ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. Telephone: 312-280-4220 or 800-545-2433, ext. 4223. Fax: 312-280-4227. E-mail: bcampbell@ala.org.

Criteria

- It must be an article (including a review article), a series of thematically connected articles, a book, or a manual published on the local, state, or national level, in English or in English translation. It need not have appeared in the "library press."
- It must have as its central concern one or more issues, events, questions, or controversies in the area of intellectual freedom.

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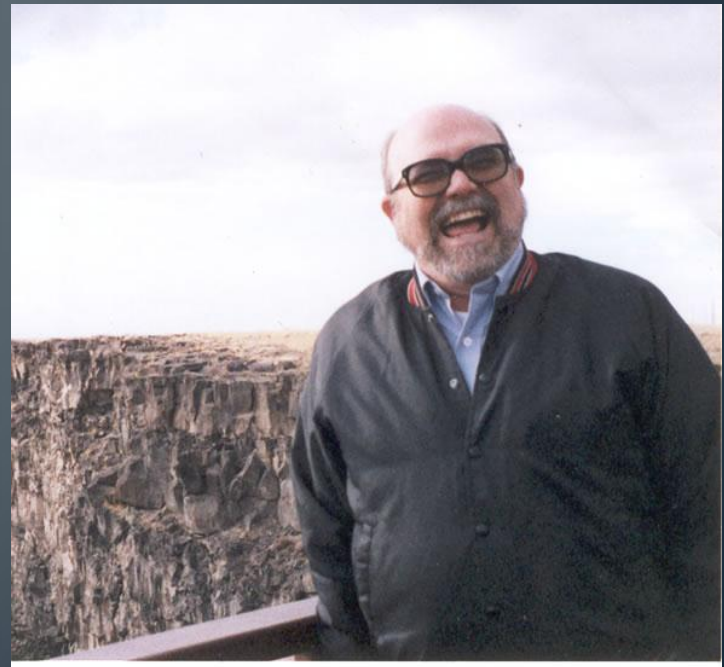
Richard A. Wilson, Associate State Librarian 2000-2010

- Worked at Idaho State Library 1976-2010.
- Associate State Librarian 2000-2010.
- Wrote dissertation on the history of the Idaho State Library.
- “Looking to the future, if librarians are consistent with what they’ve done in the past, they will continue to respond to the needs of their customers and provide information using whatever the current technologies are.”

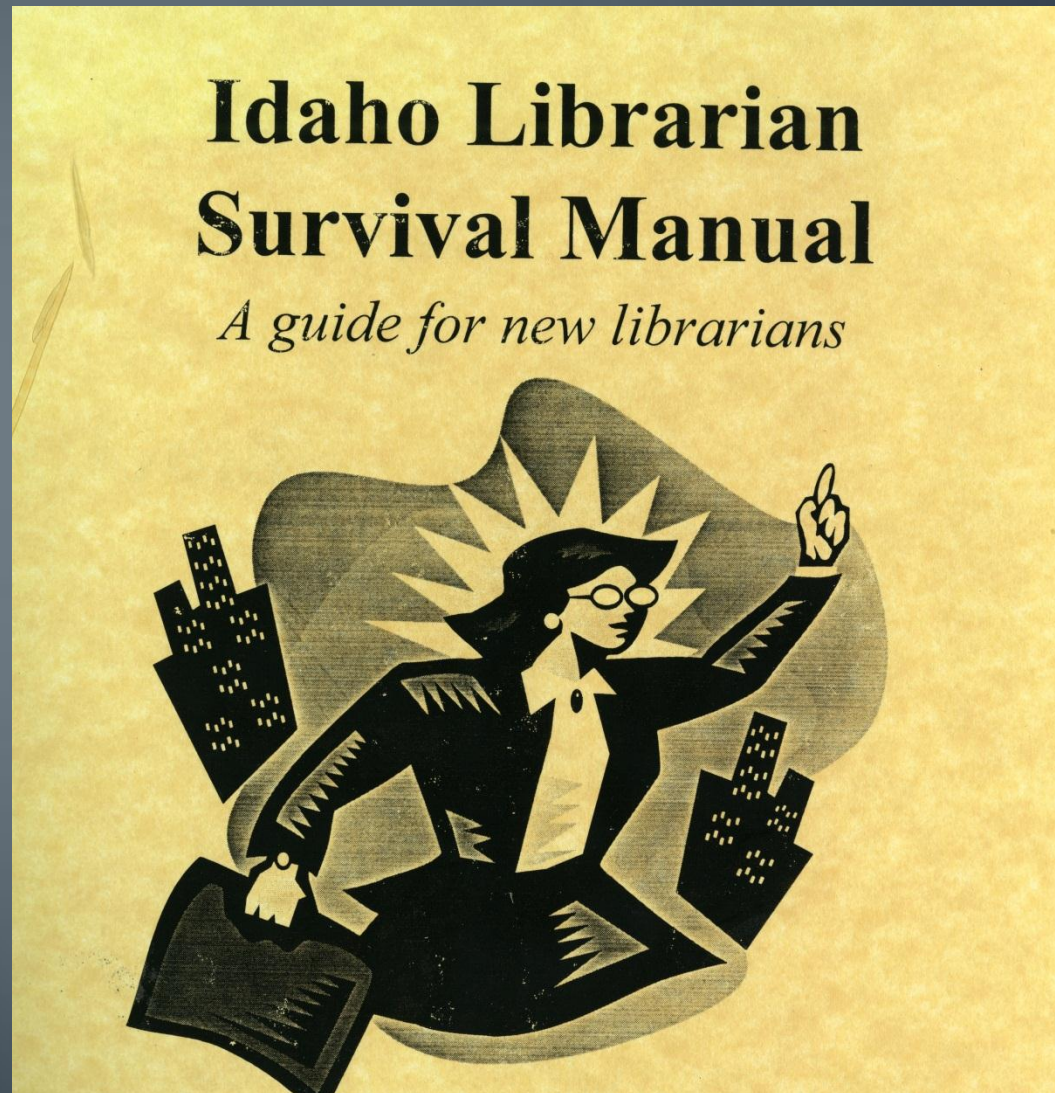


Gardner Hanks

- Gardner Hanks Scholarship Fund created by ILA in 2002.
- Continuing Education Consultant for ISL from 1989 until his death in 2002.
- Worked on national and state human rights legislation.
- Prolific writer, including *Capital Punishment and the Bible*.



Idaho Librarian Survival Guide by Gardner Hanks



Idaho Libraries Today

- Currently, there are...
- Public libraries
 - 101 main branches
 - 42 branch libraries
 - 11 bookmobiles
- 19 Academic libraries
- Over 700 School libraries
- 59 Special libraries
- Idaho population: over 1,500,00 residents.

Sources of Information

- Wilson, Richard Arave. *The development of the Idaho State Library : chronicles and narratives 1901 to 2004*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--University of Idaho, 2005.
- *Idaho Statesman Negatives Collection*, MSS 111, Special Collections and Archives, Boise State University
- *Idaho State Library Collections*, AR 62 and MS 64, Idaho State Archives
- *Columbian Club Collection*, MS 356, Idaho State Archives
- Idaho State Library Newsletters
- Idaho Commission for Libraries Newsletters

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Questions or Comments

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