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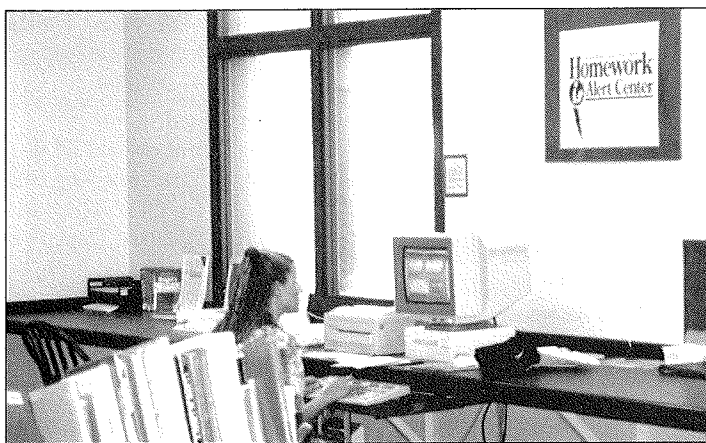
Cookies and Collaboration in Corvallis

*Kim Thompson
School-Library Liaison,
Corvallis-Benton County Public Library*

How can you begin the process of collaboration between a school district and a public library? JUST DO IT! The Nike slogan is overused, but remains sage advice. We all know how difficult it is, though, to actually take the first step and begin whether it is jogging or forming partnerships. This is how we began in Corvallis.

The foundation for our collaboration is the professional relationship established by the superintendent of schools and the director of the public library. This association, built on trust and mutual respect, created a vision that inspires us to provide better library service for our students and families.

The "Yes for Kids" county-wide effort to coordinate agencies serving children and families further expanded the



A student completes a homework assignment using the Homework Alert Center at Corvallis-Benton County Public Library.

dialogue. It became increasingly clear that we needed each other to maximize the limited resources of time and money.

When an LSCA grant provided funding for a school-library liaison, the partnership broadened. By reaching out to the

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The Positive Power of Partnerships

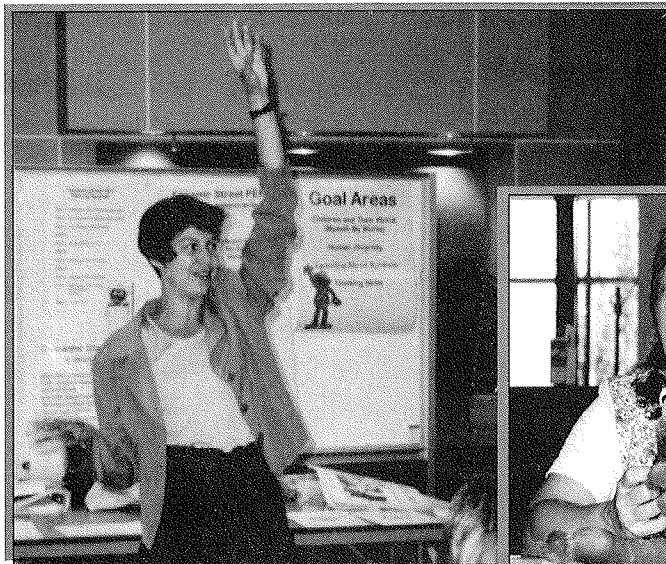
*by Nancy Spaulding
Head of Youth Services,
Cedar Mill Community Library*

Many public libraries try to serve children who spend a large part of their time in home care or daycare centers. One of the most effective steps libraries can take to serve these children is to build partnerships with the agencies that serve care providers. For several years now, the youth services librarians at Washington County's public libraries and the staff of West Tuality Child Care Services have shared information and expertise and supported each other's programs.

West Tuality Child Care Services is a United Way agency that maintains a child care resource and referral service in Washington County. West Tuality supports child care providers through information resources, a newsletter, on-site visits, and continuing education opportunities. The libraries support West Tuality Child Care Services by distributing its brochures on choosing child care and by distributing information that encourages professional growth among care providers. Some libraries maintain a Child Care Notebook and include West Tuality materials. West

Tuality supports the library programs by distributing lists of library resources for children, parents, and care professionals. West Tuality also includes information about the libraries' Summer Reading Program in an issue of its

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Above: OPB's Jennifer Jordan teaches a workshop on Sesame Street's curriculum goals.
Inset: Childcare provider Dallas Rodriguez explains the child-like qualities of Elmo.

KidsPage

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- Will overworked youth services staff be able to contribute regularly to a Web page that most cannot access at their branches?
- We don't know whether we can keep up the pages of book annotations for kids, parents and teachers.
- Because parents express anxiety about young people stumbling upon inappropriate materials while exploring the Web, we plan to create a link to the full text of *Child Safety on the Information Highway*, published by the Center for Missing Children.
- Since the primary Web users are young male university students and computerphiles (this is changing rapidly, though), how many of Multnomah County Library's youth services' clients will be able to access our Web pages? Once they access the pages, will they tell others about them? Will they return?

A Web page is like a litter box—it must be changed regularly to be revisited—So I plan to keep KidsPage updated. We'll see, and in the meantime, I hope you'll pay a visit to our library page and KidsPage! 

Recommended books

I highly recommend the following books if you're interested in learning HTML and Web page design. Although all are helpful, the first is easiest for absolute beginners in computer languages and HTML. If you don't have at least one of these titles in your library's collection, you should (but don't expect to see it on the shelves during the next two years):

Lemay, Laura. *Teach Yourself Web Publishing with HTML in a Week*. Sams, 1995; 403 pp.

Taylor, Dave. *Creating Cool Web Pages with HTML*. IDG, 1995; 244 pp.

Includes utilities disk for Windows computers.

Tittel, Ed and Steve James. *HTML for Dummies*. IDG, 1995; 449 pp.

Includes utilities disk for Windows computers.

Collaboration

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teachers directly through our Assignment Alert program (teachers may place library materials on reserve for a class), we let them know that we were willing and able to assist them and that we supported their efforts to educate our children. They were introduced to our professional staff, and became more knowledgeable about the services the public library had to offer. When Homework Alert Centers were established in the public libraries throughout Benton County, the school district placed computers at the public library for students to use for word processing. This partnership inspired the Hewlett-Packard Company to make a considerable donation of computer equipment to enhance the centers. The centers also attracted a large pool of highly educated and experienced volunteers to serve as mentors for the students working on school assignments at the library.

Constant communication, accomplished by e-mail, school district courier, phone calls, press releases, and on-site visits to schools, increased the visibility of the public library and convinced the school district employees of our sincere desire to assist them. Teachers were invited to tour the public library and to bring students for tours. Public library staff continued to provide excellent traditional services such as booktalks and reference assistance.

The expanded dialogue led to the formation of a joint committee of public library and school district staff to discuss further opportunities for partnership. The group wrote a new LSCA grant which will begin in January 1996. It is entitled, *Kids Need Libraries: Inventing a New Model of School/Public Library Collaboration*. This grant will refocus the community on the importance of the school library, especially in this time of exploding information technology. The need for students to have the skills to access, search, and evaluate the overwhelming amount of data available will be emphasized.

Writing the grant collaboratively required the library and the school district trust in each other. Both institutions showed their commitment to the project by pledging dollars and staff. (And the terrific school district cookies for meetings!) A joint statement of understanding was signed by the City of Corvallis, of which the library is a part, and the school district. Both institutions agreed to fund the school-library liaison position from September 1, 1995, even though the grant does not begin until January 1996.

Our advice: Begin! Start talking. Get librarians from both institutions together to discuss ways to help each other. Send school district staff a directory of key players in your library. Invite teachers for tours of reference areas and highlight new resources. Visit schools, especially school libraries. Co-sponsor parent education seminars. Establish Homework Alert Centers. Offer Assignment Alert.

Bake some cookies. You will be amazed at the results! 