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Day Super, Night Super

by Wyma Rogers
Newport Public Library

Editor's note: Fast-forward to 2010. What will our public libraries look like? The following description captures one vision of success: innovation, flexibility, collaboration, responsiveness to community.

Jane is the day shift supervisor this week. Last night she set her coffee alarm to start up early this Monday morning. As she sits up in bed, sipping coffee, she powers up the screen across the room and “Newell Public Library, October 2010” flashes across it. It is 7:00 a.m.

Chewing on toast, she moves to the kitchen table and watches the reference librarians from the graveyard shift wave at the library’s one-way camera as they leave for the day. She reviews the reference questions left over from the night before and assigns them to the day shift, slotting each to the appropriate mailbox.

As Jane dresses for work, she thinks about the reading circle she will chair this morning. Planning for about ten people in the library, and 20 tuning in from home and school, she arranges her thoughts. How should she approach a discussion of *Heart of Darkness*? Perhaps download a biography of Conrad for reference as they talk? And, oh yes, has she prepared for next month’s book selection? Are there enough e-books to go around for the people who show up, and multiple copies in the online virtual library?

Jane walks to work, stopping by the high school to drop off an e-book. She prepared it for the teacher of the early-bird Spanish class. She has loaded Neruda, de la Barca, and Jimenez as well as a smattering of late 20th century writers. She chats for a moment with the class. A student requests an unpublished poem by Gabriela Mistral. Jane pulls out her Bibliopalm XX, searches electronic archives and is led to the University in Bogotá where she retrieves the poem and then beams it to the student’s device.

At the library, Jane checks to see that the book drop and sorting robot are working properly, and lines up the carts of books for the first group of volunteers to shelve. It is 8:00 a.m.

Jim Brown, local agent for Coldwell Banker, awakens and considers going to the library book circle in person. Last week he attended online and liked the

perceptive comments of Jenny Smith who seems always to attend live. He saw the *Heart of Darkness* film on the library cable channel and is fascinated with Conrad’s view of the world. When Jim moved to Newell he was impressed with the excellent library and cable channel offerings. “Who selects these films and where do they find them?” he wonders. “Could it be the same folks who review movies for the library on the streaming video Web site, Librarycinema.org?” It is 9:30 a.m.

“*Heart of Darkness* got good ratings last week,” George notes as the film selection committee begins their quarterly session. Chuck, from a suburban branch tunes in with his market research report, a three-month compilation of viewing trends across commercial and library channels. George and Sherry are sipping coffee at the library and waiting for a chance to talk about the excellent film they saw over the weekend. Filmed in German, it can be shown in English, German and Spanish. Damon speaks from the Jody Foster Independent Film Festival at Mt. Spinster. He has audience responses to the first 20 screenings. “In a few minutes I can map the demographics of the audience against our library subscriber demographics,” he says. As the session continues, staff assign the review of selected films for Librarycinema.org, and plan notification of subscribers by interest area. It is 11:00 a.m.

Jimmy, the children’s storyteller and head librarian, begins rehearsal with the day care supervisors who have gathered for their storytelling class. Jenna from Head Start is today’s lead storyteller so they give her time to perform for the class. As she is finishing, Jimmy checks with Carrie to be sure that the studio behind the children’s room is set. The stories will be broadcast live over the library cable channel, simultaneously translated into Spanish, and recorded for viewing later at home.

As children arrive from the Buddhist



Family Day Care Center, parents bring in their children from Newell and nearby communities. This is Jenna's first time to lead a storytelling session, and it goes quite well. She has a little trouble with the first song, but Jimmy and the children chime in, and she is the only one aware of it. At the end of the story time, some children go right to the computers and replay the stories, reading along as their parents watch. Others walk up to Jenna and hug and kiss the soft, cuddly mouse puppet who assisted with story time.

Joaquin goes to the circulation desk and announces in a loud voice, "Tengo cinco años. Por favor, podría darme mi propia tarjeta." At once, two children's librarians step up to help him. One, laughing, returns to preparing story kits for the children from the Buddhist Family Day Care Center to take with them. As she stuffs a tiny finger puppet mouse into each kit, she overhears the other librarian saying to Joaquin, "y puedes prestar todos los libros que deseas." It is nearly noon.

Jay Wong, the Library Director, leaves for the state capitol, picking up a library board member and the elementary school reading teacher along the way. As they travel, they field calls from senior caregivers and families about privacy rights for elderly in the use of libraries. Mayor Smith calls and tells about his mom's caregiver, who complained that the mayor's mother was downloading a streaming video called, "Sex After Seventy." Smith would like voice recognition registration and programming for his mother so that she does not have to go through her caregiver to get what she wants from the library cable. Libraries need funding to be able to extend voice recognition to all customers. "Maybe," says the board member, "we could piggyback on that legislative bill addressing senior privacy issues." They arrive at the Capitol at 2:00 p.m.

Joe, the staff member in charge of new book processing, unloads a box of books, scanning each into the system as he goes. A bibliographic and holding record are

immediately created for each item scanned, and the order is marked "received" in the library acquisition module. At the end of the process he reviews the error report and reconciles it manually. Joe then pushes the cart of books over to Lou, library processing volunteer who checks labels and call numbers before shelving the new books.

Tallulah and Moira begin downloading pre-selected titles to e-books and to audio-e-books for delivery to the homebound. Some homebound patrons can download their own selections, but they still enjoy a quick visit from outreach librarian, Mai Lin, who book talks the latest offerings. It is 3:00 p.m.

Jane checks the computer for physical security of the library and equipment. Then she goes through the building, saying goodbye to staff before leaving work to attend a four o'clock yoga class. On her way out the door, she aims a two-fingered Victory sign at the one-way camera.

Zach glances at the shift ending procedure on his car screen and flinches when he sees Jane's wave. As supervisor of the 4:00 to midnight shift, he's going to be a little late. Speeding along toward the library, Zach plans his introduction for the evening staff film, "Serving Library Users on The International Space Station—Are You Ready?" 

