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Introduction

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Introduction

This story started a year ago at a chance meeting over a communal dinner at the iconic French Glen Hotel, in the shadow of the Steens Mountain, one of the most remote areas of Oregon. Small talk among strangers revealed that of the ten people at the table, two of us were librarians from the Willamette Valley—me and *OLA Quarterly* general editor, Kari Hauge. I was there with members of the Museum Advisory Committee from the Museum of Natural and Cultural History and shared my thoughts on the commonality of missions and challenges of libraries and museums. Being a good general editor, Kari convinced me to develop the idea into this issue of the *OLA Quarterly*.

Libraries and museums share institutional missions of preservation, access, education, and outreach. All of us, librarians and museum professionals alike, are committed to preserving documents, artifacts, photographs, books, and digital files that comprise our state's cultural history, while at the same time honoring our core mission to use and allow access to these documents and objects to enrich and educate fellow Oregonians. The virtual world opens up new possibilities for achieving both of these goals.

Oregon's cultural history goes back a very long time. Our understanding of the first people here is being enhanced every year by the work of research archaeologists, including those from the Museum of Natural and Cultural History. This past summer I had the privilege of taking another field trip with the Museum Advisory Committee, this time to Paisley Caves, Fort Rock Cave, and other archeological sites in Oregon's Outback.

At Paisley Caves, archaeologists unearthed fossilized human feces (coprolites) dating back just over 14,000 years. Other signs of ancient human occupation of the caves included stone tool fragments, threads made from animal sinew and plant fiber, baskets, animal hides and wooden pegs. "We found a little pit in the bottom of a cave," related Dennis Jenkins, the research archaeologist whose team excavated the Paisley Caves in 2002 and 2003. "It was full of camel, horse, and mountain sheep bones, and in there we found a human coprolite." This and 13 other coprolites contained tiny quantities of human DNA, providing what is, so far, the earliest beginning date for Oregon's cultural history.

At Fort Rock Cave, excavations by Luther Cressman in the 1930s uncovered well-preserved sandals woven from sagebrush bark and other fibers. These were found above and below volcanic ash deposited by the explosion of Mt. Mazama, which created Crater Lake 7,600 years ago. Designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1963 and as a National Natural Landmark in 1976, Fort Rock Cave is now managed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and is open several weekends per year for guided tours. I encourage you to sign up for a tour and make a pilgrimage to this site.

Libraries and museums have the challenge of preserving the fragile record of human history, while at the same time fulfilling the public's desire to see and interact with the evidence. (Well maybe not the coprolites!) Digital collections and virtual exhibits give all of us greater opportunity to develop our understanding of Oregon's history—to travel back through time and imagine who was living here and how they lived.

What inspired this issue of the *OLA Quarterly* is the amazing scope of libraries and museums working independently and sometimes together to ensure preservation of our diverse cultural heritage; enhance access to documents, photographs, and artifacts; and educate the public. The ongoing work described in these articles is just a small sample of the effort that is extended every day to teach others about those Oregonians who came before us and to preserve the record of their lives for those Oregonians who will come after us. In this way, we weave ourselves into the tapestry of this Eden.

Read and enjoy!

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