OLAQ

July 2014

What big teeth you have!

Brian Bond
Coos Bay Public Library

What Big Teeth You Have!

by Brian Bond
Coos Bay Public Library

I was given a clear mission when asked to write for this issue of the *OLA Quarterly*: to implore those working in children's library services throughout Oregon to become involved in the political process. Involvement means becoming familiar with issues affecting library services, meeting with your legislators to enlist their support of the "One to Get Ready: Read!" campaign, and letting your legislators know that measures introduced in Salem have lasting consequences at the local level. The passage of Measure 47 does not mean that this mission has gone away; indeed, the need for concerted effort by OLA members during the 1997 session is even more pronounced. The shape of that effort will be clearer once legislators begin to deal with the intricacies of Measure 47. I hope headlines such as one in Eugene's *Register Guard*, "Libraries, Parks Top list of Measure 47 Casualties," will be inaccurate.

While I am hopeful, I am still struggling to make sense of what happened on Election Day and what it means to children's services. The idealist in me, that portion that guides much of my work in children's services, wonders how it was possible that so many people placed their pocketbook before the welfare of Oregon's children. Unfortunately, my realist side does not wonder at all. However, as I try to resolve my idealism with reality, I am drawn to a fairy tale, which at first glance may seem to shed no light at all. But, bear with me. Fairy tales are timeless, exploring roles and scenarios that can illuminate the present.

I turn to two versions of Little Red Riding Hood: Arthur Rackham's presentation of Perrault in *The Arthur Rackham Fairy Book*, and James Marshall's contemporary retelling, *Red Riding Hood*. The former is traditional and serious, while the latter is light-hearted, and, as the publisher states, contains "irreverent flourishes." In both, the tellings provide "a shock of recognition" through their depiction of the straightforward actions of just a few characters. The differences between the two versions, particularly in the endings, are shocking enough to lead even the most apolitical advocate for children, me, to act.

First, let's get reacquainted with the characters.

Mother: This caring homemaker who can whip up griddle-cakes or custard in a flash is a trusting single parent living near the Dark Woods. She sends Red Riding Hood off alone without warning in Rackham. Marshall adds the necessary modern touch to the sendoff: "Now, whatever you do, go straight to Granny's, do not tarry, do not speak to strangers."

Red Riding Hood: She is a loving, caring, trustworthy, and trusting girl who becomes scared in the Dark Woods. She is big hearted, but gullible, independent, but defenseless. She is eaten, permanently in Rackham, and temporarily in Marshall's version, where she is extremely grateful to be rescued.

The Wolf: Here is a single-focused, smooth-talking, selfish male who is also witty, quick thinking, and agile. He is the opportunist par excellence and a master of disguise. He has the nasty habit of swallowing without chewing, and according to Marshall, snores.

Granny: This trusting, straightforward, and spirited old woman lives on the other side of the Dark Woods. She loves to read and "was furious at having her reading interrupted upon the appearance of the wolf" (Marshall). She is bedridden and defenseless.

Discounting the minor differences, Rackham's and Marshall's versions are parallel to this point with only two (mother and wolf) of the four original characters alive. In Rackham's version, only the page number appears after "the wicked wolf fell upon poor Little Red Riding Hood and ate her up." This, or a similar version, must be the first telling many of us heard as children. The story we heard ends suddenly. The wolf wins. And the wolf will win again and again no matter how often the story is told.

Illustration: Sue Dolan

Trustees
(continued from page 2)

ifies for membership. Checks should be addressed to People for Oregon Libraries, and mailed to Deborah Jacobs, 2995 NW Royal Oaks Drive, Corvallis, OR 97330.

3. **Be an Advocate.** Trustees must assert themselves politically for libraries on local and state levels. We can speak out about issues in situations where it would be awkward or risky for the library staff to be vocal. Our opinions about library services will carry weight with neighbors and friends. We should speak up at service clubs and neighborhood associations. We should talk with our newspaper editor and call in to local radio talk shows to make sure the community understands library issues. We should get involved in campaigns of candidates for public office.

As librarians have been compelled to become politically active by emergent issues in recent years, so must trustees take on a more active role in our democratic processes in Oregon. To do otherwise, to continue to take a passive posture, is to deprive a library of a valuable and increasingly necessary asset: the ability to compete politically.

We trustees must throw our hats in the ring! **Q**

ENDNOTES

1. In the interests of economy, the term "trustee" is used throughout to refer to advisory board members as well.

2. ORS 265.232 is too broadly written and is misapplied to volunteer citizen boards and commissions.

George H. Bell is a member of the Salem Public Library Advisory Board. He is a former trustee of the Oregon State Library. In 1995, OLA made him an Honorary Life Member.

Big Teeth
(continued from page 4)

In my childhood, the effect of this story on me was so strong that on those evenings I had to run through the Dark Woods from my friend's house, I knew the wolf was hot on my heels. I also knew he was tricky; to look back offered him an opportunity to sneak ahead of me.

Thus, when I finally came upon other versions of Little Red Riding Hood, the ones were the hunter saves both the girl and the granny, I was shocked. What a difference that hunter makes! Quite simply, he makes all the difference in the world. The hunter comes, sees, and conquers only to disappear, perhaps into another tale where his services are needed.

Tales such as Little Red Riding Hood exist in "once upon a time." They serve us well there. But, sometimes, we can bring tales out of the timeless and, guided by their lessons or the emotions they evoke, enliven them to better make sense of our own time. My current readings of Little Red Riding Hood remind me that I meet symbolic and stereotypical wolves daily. If I can draw something from the tale, it would be to remember to use the hunter's quali-

ties to battle the wolves at the library's door. The hunter is the one who was so ready that he appeared to be only passing by. The one who knew pretense and disguise. The one whose knife of deliverance was sharp, timely, and true. The one who was so prepared as well as so right in his actions that we feel no regret for his adversary. (What is a mere wolf anyway?) The one who would save Red Riding Hood and her hopes. **Q**

REFERENCES:
Marshall, James. Red Riding Hood. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1987.

Rackham, Arthur. The Arthur Rackham fairy book: a book of old favorites with new illustrations. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co.,1933.

Red Riding Hood. Grimms' Fairy Tales, Trans. E.V. Lucas, L. Crane and M. Edwards. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1945.

Brian Bond is the children's services librarian at the Coos Bay Public Library and OLA Children's Division past-president.

Plan on coming to Salem on February 26 for OLA's Legislative Day.