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## Introduction

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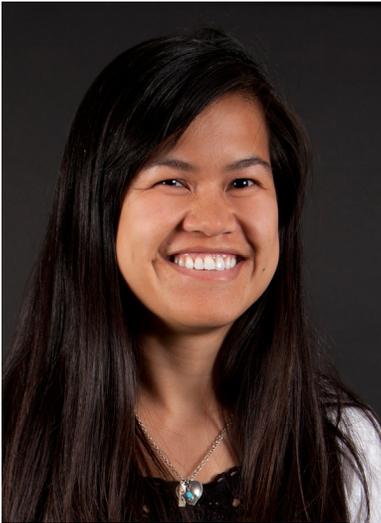
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# Introduction



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Ngoc-Yen Tran is the Outreach and Student Engagement Librarian at the University of Oregon. She received her MLIS from the University of Washington iSchool and her BA in English and BA in art history from Willamette University. Yen's job is multifaceted, including: creatively managing a small residence hall library, building and sustaining campus partnerships, collaborating with international studies department students and faculty, and developing opportunities that engage students with the UO Libraries and librarians. Yen enjoys crafting and the outdoors.



**Serenity Ibsen**  
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Serenity Ibsen, Technical Services and Archives Librarian at Pacific Northwest College of Art, has a BA in Art History and an MLS. Serenity's library passions include user experience, scholarly communications, and digital initiatives. Most of year, Serenity helps develop tools for students at PNCA and serves as library liaison to the BFA, MFA, and MA Thesis students. She's an amateur archer and mycologist who almost exclusively reads science fiction.

Ambiguity. Unknown. Gray area. These are common words that we have been hearing in librarianship and will continue to hear as libraries and librarian roles continue to change and evolve. Often, these words are paired with creativity, innovation, resourcefulness, and inventiveness when determining how to best meet our challenges.

“Creativity” is not an easily definable word, but within the context of an occupation or field of study, creativity can be defined as “an attempt to propel a field from where it is to wherever the creator believes the field should go” (Sternberg, 2006, p. 95). Robert J. Sternberg in his “Nature of Creativity” article goes on to say that there are eight types of creative contributions that can be made within a field at any given time; the ones seen in library discussions and in practice have included: redefinition (attempting to define where the field is but from a different viewpoint or perspective), advance forward incrementation (moving the field in the direction it is already going but beyond where others are ready for it to go), and integration (integrating two formerly diverse ways of thinking into a single way of thinking) (2006, pp. 96–7). We have seen these concepts manifested as libraries become cultural spaces and makerspaces, places that loan out unconventional materials such as seeds and equipment, and librarians integrating business and marketing practices to bring awareness of library resources and services to patrons.



Richard Florida sees the influence of creativity on our economy, especially with the rise of what he calls the Creative Class, the group of people who are contributing to economic and societal growth through their imaginative skill or originality of thought. Florida states that, “In virtually any industry, from automobiles to fashion, food products, and information technology itself, the winners in the long run are those who can create and keep creating” (2002, p. 5). He also points out that creativity is multidimensional and should not be limited to the creation of new inventions, products, or firms. Instead, he says that creativity can take on many forms including revisions, enhancements, or new processes (2002, p. 5). In this ever-changing world of new technologies, economic fluctuations, and evolving user needs, creativity enables libraries to more agilely adapt. Adaptability is the key to remaining relevant and fulfilling our missions, and creativity allows us to have a more holistic view in achieving this.

For many who study creativity, there is also the belief that creativity is valuable and should be cultivated (for those working in all fields or occupations). Steven J. Tepper and George D. Kuh in “Let’s Get Serious About Cultivating Creativity” for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (more details in the “Creativity and Advocacy” article in this issue), they articulated that, “creativity is cultivated through rigorous training and deliberately practicing certain core abilities and skills over an extended period of time” (2001, para 6). Amongst these practices include: the capacity to bring people, power, and resources together to implement novel ideas, and the ability to approach problems in non-routine ways using analogy and metaphor (2001, para 6). Innovative approaches to spaces, service, programs, and our own professional development will also empower our users to explore their own creativity.

So how have libraries or librarians been creative? In this issue of the *Oregon Library Association Quarterly*, we wanted to showcase the creative, inspired, and imaginative ways librarians are emerging from the stacks, stepping out from their traditional roles, and thriving in our (currently) ambiguous workplaces. Ross Betzer’s article highlights divergent thinking as a technique for more creative reference services, Amanda Meeks offers suggestions for unconventional conferences that will inspire us to remix librarianship, Jey Wann asks if the music we listen to sparks our creativity and productivity, Jane Nichols describes non-routine thinking with for the Oregon Statewide Database Licensing Program, and Candice Watkins links the connection between creativity and advocacy with a novel idea.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the articles in this issue and get inspired to think outside of the traditional library box! Additionally, if you have worked on a project or activities that sparked patron interest, creativity, and curiosities, or transformed your library in a creative way, we want to hear from you! Please send us a short description about anything from makerspaces, doing outreach to unconventional groups like the homeless or with student life departments on college campuses, training library student workers or volunteers to be peer-to-peer instructors, spearheading digital initiatives, engaging in different kinds of social media practices, etc. We want to learn from you and to transform our libraries and library practices in positive ways with your ideas!

—Serenity Ibsen & Ngoc-Yen Tran

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