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Our Voices

Library Optimistic About Challenges Ahead

Student Toby Woods dreams of someday starting a nonprofit community center and dog park. He loves animals and wants to take advantage of the therapeutic symbiosis between people and pets.

A regular in the library, Toby recently discovered a two-volume set on the shelf titled: "This I Believe: The personal philosophies of remarkable men and women," based on the National Public Radio series. Inspired, he wrote his own essay, which he hopes to see published in the Percival Review.

"Many people call me soft, sensitive, too caring, and even unmanly," he wrote. "I don't let that bother me too much, because I really am lucky to be alive."

During his military service, Toby's father was exposed to poisonous gas. "The Army doctors think that maybe that was the cause of my birth defect and why my mother had so many miscarriages," writes Toby, who has limited use of both hands. Of his personal philosophy, he writes, "I believe that if you love someone, you should always be honest, loyal, and be there for them when times are rough."



Margaret Thomas

As the South Puget Sound Community College Library faces rough times, we ask ourselves, "Is it more important to protect services for students or the inanimate 'collection?'" The answer seems obvious, but not every academic library has opted to sacrifice collections. A healthy collection fosters serendipity: that experience where people like Toby discover something they weren't looking for and wake the muse.

Generally, we buy electronic and print materials that dovetail with the college curriculum; but we also look for things that may help students raise children, quit smoking or nourish their souls. In the coming years, there will no doubt be fewer of these "luxury" buys. We likely will rely more on the strapped public library to furnish prize-winning novels and the next edition of "This I believe."

There are benefits to distilling our collection and thinking hard about priorities. But there are also risks in relying too heavily on things we don't actually own. Someone aptly expressed one of the downsides of the digital age: You can get whatever you want; you just can't keep it.

In this issue:

Submissions

Send us your ideas!

Call for topic submissions

Wide varieties of issues and ideas swirl around a college campus. In each edition of The Wave, the Office of College Relations wants to catch one of those circulating topics and present it to the South Puget Sound Community College community. College Relations invites you to suggest possible subjects. We will then tap into the college's pool of experts to address the matters. To propose a topic, contact

Aaron Managhan at ext. 5304.

While I like our online collections of electronic books, journals and streaming videos as much as students do, I worry sometimes about who's in charge of our collection now. We get what the vendors give us. Lately there has been listserv chatter about one vendor that considered limiting ebook sessions to 15 minutes. And what if the fees for the ebook databases we now rely on suddenly look more like the price tag for the original Gutenberg Bible?

I'm optimistic. Our vendors need us, too. And electronic collections will ease the burden for students if library hours are limited. In coming months, the challenge will be to balance cuts to services and collections — so we can be there for students when times are rough.

**Note: The student in this story, Toby Woods, gave written permission to share his personal information. Normally FERPA rules would prohibit the public disclosure of this type of information.*

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