



Library Reader

Ojai, California

Winter 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Judy Oberlander

In this increasingly digital world the role of the public library is often undervalued. In fact several years ago a member of the Ventura City Council questioned the need for public libraries, saying that our phones can access information as well as a library. But anyone who walks into one of our Ojai Valley libraries can see instantly that there is a lot going on and all of it is important. You can look something up on your phone, but at the very least you probably need a Wi-Fi connection. Our public libraries offer free WI-Fi and our libraries provide free computers to use, service that is important to our elderly, students, and underserved residents.

The downtown Ojai Library teems with activity. Every afternoon students and tutors work together in the main room while many other students take advantage of the Homework Center in the community room. Tutors for adult literacy use the library to meet with adults who are non-English speakers or who need help with reading skills. A group of ukulele players

may be strumming away over by the fireplace. In the mornings as many as 40 children gather for story time. STEAM programs offer fun training in science for young minds. Youth Librarian, Courtney Lerner, has organized a popular Teen Advisory Council that meets once a month to eat pizza and discuss leadership opportunities.

Librarian Ron Solórzano has instituted a wide range of programs at the library: Lectures on modern art by docents from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, talks on the environment, micro-plastics, and the removal of Matilija Dam by local scientists and college professors (over 40 people attended!), jazz concerts and Opera Santa Barbara, monthly poetry readings featuring well-known poets, free discussion meetings with the Agora Foundation on American historical documents. These programs attract many people to the library who have never been to it before and they are only a small part of what is happening at our Library. It is a welcoming common space

for our community and as such it serves as the hub and heart of Ojai. T.S. Eliot said that “the very existence of libraries affords the best evidence that we may yet have hope for the future of man.” Our Ojai Library is a shining example of that evidence. ❁

The OVLFF wants to lower our carbon footprint and costs by emailing our newsletter to you.

The print, paper, postage, time and labor expenses combine for a costly and inefficient communication mode. On behalf of our planet and OVLFF's budget, please consider receiving future communications from us electronically as a PDF file - just send an email to: contact@ovlff.com and put “Newsletter” in the subject line. ❁

COURTNEY LERNER, YOUTH LIBRARIAN

Meet Courtney Lerner, our new Youth Librarian for the Ojai Valley Region of the Ventura County Library. Courtney comes to us with a wide array of experience in youth services. She was the coordinator of Family Literacy at the Beverly Hills Public Library and worked at the Goleta Library, where she was officially trained in the nationally-acclaimed Family Place Libraries™. Courtney

was also hired as the first Bookmobile Librarian in the Lompoc Public Library System. In this role she built outreach services and the collection from the ground up.

Courtney received her Master's Degree from San Jose State University in 2010. Her focus was in Youth & Teen Services, with emphases on programming and readers advisories. She has a passion for intellectual freedom and providing service to all.

Courtney is often lovingly referred to as Ms. Coco by her Ojai Storytime families. Ms. Coco does Storytime & Craft at the Meiners Oaks Library on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. and at the Ojai Library on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Courtney grew up visiting family in Ojai. She is so excited to be living and working in Ojai. Come by the Ojai Library and visit—she'd love to say hi! ❁

OJAI VALLEY LIBRARY FRIENDS AND FOUNDATION

(805) 646-4064

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The Board welcomes anyone who is interested in its activities to the Board meetings, fourth Tuesday of each month- 6 pm in the Twice-Sold Tales meeting room. Enter through the Ojai Library.



Volunteers Needed

Seeking book enthusiasts to help clerk & sort

Choose the Option that Best Fits your Schedule

Store Clerk - Weekly or BiMonthly afternoon shift (2.5 hrs)

Store Clerk Sub - Help us clerk the store on an as-needed basis

Sorter/Shelver - Help us sort & shelve the donated books (somewhat physically demanding)

An opportunity to interact with Ojai's citizens and visitors.

Twice Sold Tales - Ojai's Library Bookstore

All proceeds benefit the Ojai Library

For More Info, contact Liz at EliabethBeaty@gmail.com

NEW TECHNOLOGY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE OPTIONS AT YOUR LIBRARY

By Ron Solórzano,
Regional Librarian

Think about the old card catalog—rows and rows of drawers, heavy with individual cards for titles, authors, and subject areas pointing to each and every item in a library's collection. Today, most public catalogs have moved online, and those chests of drawers are no longer a part of your average library, replaced instead by a single public access computer terminal. All of that information is still there (and, arguably, is more accessible!), but with a fraction of the footprint, which frees up space in the library for anything from more books to seating to display or activity areas.

Recently, the Ojai Library was the recipient of two new self-checkout stations. These new models replaced an older, clunkier technology, and day after day customers tell us how user-friendly the new system is, how quick and convenient. Our new self-checkout stations represent an important pillar of the Ventura County Library's strategic plan: customer service, and in particular self-service. People use the library in all sorts of ways, some of which require the assistance of library staff and some which do not. To a customer, having library staff check their items out for them is a transaction so quick as to seem negli-

gible, but even for a library like Ojai's those transactions add up. The Ojai Library averages between 200 and 250 visitors per day, and with that amount of traffic self-service is a big part of keeping our staff from becoming overwhelmed.

If you are ever curious about how the library works, how it has changed over the years, or how we plan to change in the future, do not hesitate to reach out. In the meantime, be sure to check out all of our usual great programming here at the Ojai Library. See what we have going on by visiting www.vencolibrary.org/ojai. If you have ideas for events that you would like to see happen—or if you just want to tell us how we're doing—come by and see us at the library, give us a phone call, or send us an email.

Upcoming and Ongoing Events:

- February 21, 12:30pm: Author Talk – Meet Dana Simpson, award-winning author of the wildly popular *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* children's graphic novel series.
- Weekly on Mondays, 11:30am: Monday Matinees – The Ojai Library will screen 2020 award nominees and winners on 2/10, 2/24, 3/2, 3/9, 3/16, and 3/23. Contact the library for film titles.
- Wednesdays, 10:30am: Early Literacy Class – Stories, poems, music, movement, a simple craft, and fun! Ages 0-5.
- Wednesdays, 4pm: Uku-

lele Club – Musicians of all skill levels are welcome to join this weekly jam session.

- Wednesdays, 5:30pm: Prime Writers' Group – A place for aspiring young authors and poets to share their work and provide constructive feedback. Ages 8-18.

- Thursdays, 5:30pm: Fiction Writing Workshop – Learn to create powerful and engaging stories while getting feedback from other writers.

- Sundays, 2pm: Fiber Fun Workshop – Kids age eight and up explore colors and textures through fiber art.

- Sundays, 3:30pm: Knitting & Fiber Arts Club – A drop-in group for people interested in knitting, crochet, and other fiber crafts.

- First and Third Mondays, 7pm: Shakespeare Salon – Local Shakespeare fans host readings and discussions of classic plays.

- First Wednesdays, 7:30pm: Adult Book Discussion – Meet with others to discuss a new title each month.

- Third Tuesdays, 6pm: Ojai Poetry Series – A chance to share your poetry and be inspired by others.

- Second Sundays, 5pm: Gathering for Justice – A guided discussion group that seeks to deepen understanding of how prejudice works in ourselves and others.

Ron Solórzano,
Regional Librarian
Ventura County Library System
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Ron.Solorzano@ventura.org ☘

MEINERS OAKS IS STEAMING

Deborah DaMore,
Librarian Meiners Oaks

As part of our ongoing outreach efforts, the Meiners Oaks Library partners with Meiners Oaks Elementary School to present STEAM programs (Science, Engineering, Technology, Art, and Math) at their Street Eats and Saturday School events. STEAM programs are designed to be a fun learning experience for children to enhance science literacy and skills. Why is this important? A recent article in the Pacific Coast Business Times

(Dubroff, December 6, 2019) posits that the key to growing Ventura County's economy is transitioning from an agricultural-based one to one based on higher paying jobs in technology and other areas.

As Ventura County Library Director Nancy Schram says, "We especially want to focus on the younger students, and introduce them to STEAM skills and related careers." Working with preschoolers and students in grades K-6, we have launched rockets, built flashlights and lava lamps, and made "Stixplosions." In the process the children have learned about aerodynamics,

electrical circuits, fluid and thermodynamics, and chain reactions, all while having fun. We have also created art masterpieces!

Meiners Oaks School considers the library an integral part of their events, and the students are always eager to see what we have brought with us. Our next scheduled event is Saturday School, February 8th from 10-2. The Oak View Library has STEAM lab events on the third Thursday of the month, and all three Ojai Valley Libraries have weekly STEAM events during Summer Reading. ❁



1893 Thatcher Library

COMMUNITY INPUT

Please, send us your thoughts.

- What additional programs/services should the Ojai Valley Libraries be offering?
- Is there anything else you believe The Ojai Library Friends should be doing?
- Any other comments you would like to bring to our attention about the libraries or The Friends.

Help guide us as we move forward. Send your thoughts to contact@ovlff.com ❁

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE! STUDENTS AS CITIZEN SOCIOLINGUISTS

Betsy Rymes – *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 27, 2020

Students and teachers alike can use sociolinguistics to think about the words they and those around them use.

The expression "Watch your language!" usually implies something along the lines of "Don't say what you just said!" But watching your language doesn't have to have such a negative connotation. It can also mean simply choosing your words based on where you are and whom you're with. This type of contextual awareness is crucial for young people coming of age in today's hashtag culture, where a single offhand comment, thoughtless tweet, or poorly worded Facebook post can have lasting consequences.

Although targeted at teachers, this article is important to parents (who are, indeed, teachers of their children) as a look at the dynamic use of language.

[*Ed. Note-* if you would like a copy of this article as a PDF file send an email to: contact@ovlff.com with the word "Language" in the subject line.] ❁

THE LITTLE LIBRARY THAT COULD

by Kerry Slattery

1891: The brand new newspaper in a small California town featured a tiny article: "There's now a shelf of books in a private home available to the young men of the community for use on Saturday nights."

It must have been a popular shelf because a news item that year said "The Congregational Church wishes to establish a free circulating library, where young men and others could go to get whatever reading matter they might select – on Monday and Wednesday afternoons." People in the town started rounding up donations of books, magazines and papers, and a Library Committee was formed to raise money so they could get even more books. Pretty soon it was clear that the need was greater than a few shelves at the Congregational Church. The town needed a real free circulating library.

So in 1893 they did what small towns do – they held an Ice Cream Social! There were booths under oak trees, decorated with palms and Japanese lanterns. Young ladies in white sold candy, ice cream, cake, sherbet and lemonade. There was an orchestra of local musicians, as well as banjo and guitar trios and a quartet, which sang "The Little Brown Church in the Vale" and "The Bull Frog in the Pond." There was even Chinese music performed by two Chinese employees of a local private school.

It was a big hit and it raised the grand sum of \$80. Which is not bad, as that would be \$2,200 today. The local paper devoted a full

column to the affair, with the heading "WE'LL HAVE A LIBRARY!"

After the fundraiser, a respected local Headmaster and founder of a private school nearby gave \$500 (about \$14,000 today) to be used for books in a free public library named for his late brother George who had died as a boy soon after arriving in the town – on the condition that they were housed in a suitable building with regular library service. That got the ball rolling and the community got in gear. Not to be outdone, the local general merchandise store owner offered a free lease on land near the 'main drag' downtown-- a main street with dirt roads, wooden sidewalks, and horses and buggies regularly ambling along the avenue.

On September 9, 1893, The George Thacher Memorial Library officially opened on South Montgomery in the town of Nordhoff in the Ojai Valley. The one room library was called by some "one of the most graceful, most inviting little buildings in Ventura County or any other place. It seems to say, 'Come in, rest your body and regale your mind'." It was 16' x 24' with a front porch, a kerosene stove and lighting from two kerosene lanterns. (It was 1913 before the town got electricity.)

In 1908 the library trustees bought their own lot, and a house mover moved the building down the street – near where the Ojai Art Center is today – and a room was added. In 1916 it joined the Ventura County Library as the very first branch.

Over time, the growing town needed a bigger library, and eventually a spectacular new building was

created on a lot donated by town benefactor Edward Drummond Libbey, who died before it opened. I don't think he ever knew that it had been the very site of the old Congregational Church that had housed the original small library shelves.

April 15, 1928 was the Dedication of the new Ojai Library on East Ojai Avenue and Ventura Street - and wouldn't you know - its Dedication was presided over by the Board of Trustees Chairman Sherman Thacher, the very same school headmaster who had donated \$500 back in 1893 to spearhead the town's first library – named after his younger brother.

Today, the Ojai Library averages 263 people a day (almost the whole population of the town when the library first opened), with over 13,000 card-holders. In terms of visitation, Ojai is second in the Ventura County library system, behind the E.P. Foster Library (in terms of per-capita residents of the service area Ojai's library is #1 in the county). It's a hub for an afterschool homework center, book clubs and many events.

But what happened to that original building that got left behind – the little library that could – back on Montgomery Street? It was eventually moved to a small lot on Lion Street, at the corner of Aliso, where it's had several lives over the years – and there it still sits today. My husband Ben and I recently drove by and it looks just like the photos I've seen from the 1890s. I gave it a little salute and thanked it for its service. ❁



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PORTRAITS: MARVELOUS WOMEN OF OJAI

If you attend the current stage production of Shirley Valentine at the Ojai Art Center you can't help but notice a photographic display entitled "Marvelous Women of Ojai." The collection of portraits was created by Stephen Adams and Richard Sven Selgren as a tribute to the kind of woman portrayed by Anna Katoula in the show, as well as a celebration of the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. The photo collection also appears in the Playbook. Kris Humphries' portrait is there, representing The Ojai Valley Library Friends. ❁



Kris Humphries, OVLFF Board Member
Picture included in display at Art Center
Women of Ojai 2020