

Kansas Libraries

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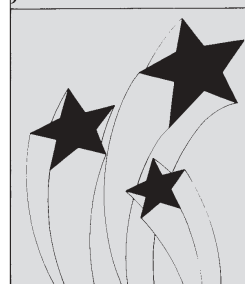
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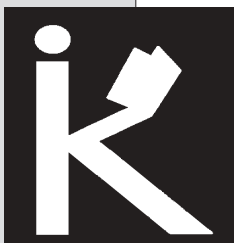
Mentor, colleague and friend

—by Eric Hansen
Executive Director, Kansas Library Network Board

One of my earliest memories of Duane Johnson comes from my interview for the position of Executive Director of the Kansas Library Network Board in late summer of 1998. Duane described his management style as cordial and collegial. In the years since then, Duane's words and actions proved the truth of his statement over and over.

Shortly before I began work at the State Library, Duane called me because he thought my background was "a little too Eastern Kansas," and he wanted to find some way to play down that fact in the announcement about my hire. At the time I didn't see why my geographic location would be an issue, but it wasn't long before I came to realize the value of this political insight. Most of all, I quickly came to understand and appreciate his concern for including all parts of the state in library service. This ethic became the basic value that has driven my work with the Network Board ever since.

After more than twenty years of service to the state, Duane has reached a point where he knows what's really important in work and in life. After one particularly valuable discussion we had at the state library, I told him that I always enjoyed talking with him, because he always sees the big picture. I will miss the vision and the man.



Strong Kansas library community

—by Shannon Roy
Director, Local Library Development

The state of Kansas has as one of its assets a strong library community. Regional system staff are essential to excellent service in their member libraries. Flourishing urban systems serve the growing metropolitan populations. Well-trained rural librarians use modern library technology with considerable expertise. A variety of academic library programs and in-service training programs are available at reasonable cost for all types of librarians, who need to meet the growing demands of their profession.

Duane Johnson would point out that all this is the result of many people working together for many years. And that is true. But his contribution to Kansas libraries has



Duane Johnson
(Photo courtesy of Vicky Wolf)

been extraordinary. Duane has been a leader who is open to change, but not driven by it. He has consistently favored education, information sharing, consulting and consensus building, but never coercion. As a result, Kansas is a land of strong library partnerships.

The state library has a successful relationship with regional library systems, urban systems, library association, rural libraries, academic and school libraries and the School of Library and Information Management. These agencies have also worked with each other to develop excellent library service for Kansans.

Duane has managed his own staff with a light touch, offering direction when it is needed or requested, but always expecting initiative and fostering creativity. His staff members have also been grateful for his support

when they have been hit by illness, misfortune or bereavement. He is the only Kansas state librarian that most of them have ever known and they are quite frankly unhappy at the prospect of losing him.

But the state library still has a fine staff. Those staff members are still aware of their continuing partnerships with a statewide network of fine librarians, and with many other Kansans who work together in a variety of ways to develop Kansas libraries. Duane's gifts to Kansas libraries will not disappear with his resignation. They will be with us for many years to come.

Profound Kansas library leader

—by Jeff Hixon
Director, Library Information Technology

I first met Duane Johnson in the summer of 1979, as I arrived early one morning at Hutchinson Public Library and SCKLS where he was Director. I was there to begin a three-week practicum, which would complete the requirements for my MLS from Emporia State.

So much of the program he outlined for my stay was exciting, even thrilling, that by contrast the one alarming remark he made is the one that really made an impression. As he looked over the busy schedule, he observed that in addition to circulation, reference, administration, children's, technical, and all of the system services, I probably should have been assigned to spend some time with the custodial staff. There was, evidently, no true preparation for library administration without an appreciation for the contributions of all.

I sat there, practicing the art of masking feelings behind a vacant facial expression, while he pondered his own insight. I wanted to scream that after two years of hosing uneaten dorm food down a garbage disposal, my capacity for learning about plumbing had been exhausted.

After a moment, the conversation moved casually on, and I had been given a lesson that I would not learn as quickly as I should have: When teaching others, focus on what they can't learn on their own, and trust them, with guidance, to discover and learn the rest.

I did in fact go directly from library school to the administration of a small public library with 70-year old plumbing, and was forced more than once by circumstance to make

its survival my top priority. I don't think I, or the library, suffered too much from my lack of on-site experience. From time to time, I recalled that quiet, confidence-building assumption: The point being mentioned, the point would be taken. This recollection, along with sometimes harsh experience, turned into something that would always be there in memory, should I have the good sense to call on it.

Throughout my career I have always looked for, and been grateful to find, others who teach with this minimalist approach. Those most successful in hammering out the dents in my mind have usually been those who point out the problem areas, handed me the hammer and let me swing away, sometimes gleefully, sometimes not, at my own head.

Spending the next 20 years at a distance from the state library, I wasn't always able to see whether Duane was still the kind of leader I remembered from Hutchinson. It wouldn't be honest to say I even gave it much thought, but I couldn't ignore the remarkable rapport I kept developing with the State Library staff whom I worked with as a regional system consultant, or their unique yet oddly familiar blend of institutional loyalty and revolutionary independence.

So when I came to work at the State Library in 1998, it was both amazing and totally expected to find that my agenda as devised by Mr. Johnson had not changed much in twenty years. Find out what needs to be done. Do all you can, and holler if you need help.

In a three-week whirlwind tour of a public library and regional system, even I didn't have time to find myself in need of help, so there was one more thing to be experienced, and that was the kind of support that you get from a minimalist teacher. Guess what? It's not minimal.

It's easy to think that the natural consequence of "Find out what needs to be done, and do all you can" has to be "...and be prepared to take the heat, even the fall for it." What I found, especially in my early days in Topeka, was that when I made a misstep, I might still have independence but I was not alone. Those whose feathers I ruffled may not have appreciated the decision Duane supported, but usually interpreted the support itself as a promise of what any of us in Kansas libraries could expect when support was called for.

This is supposed to be about Duane Johnson, not about me. More disciplined writers will, I have no doubt, say

what I should be saying about what the past 22 years have meant to Kansas libraries and the people who make them go. Of all the things that have changed, grown and improved, I unfortunately know myself the best.

To this day, I cannot walk into the vastly changed library building at 901 North Main in Hutchinson without a tiny little tickle that reminds me of homecoming. Three weeks poking your nose over the shoulders of busy people probably doesn't qualify one for "former employee" status, but maybe it can be excused because, looking back on that day I see it as the beginning of something important that, like it or not, for me is coming to a kind of end.

A legacy for Kansas librarianship

—by Roy Bird
Federal Projects Coordinator/Library Consultant

It is with a great deal of respect and humility that I set fingers to keyboard to write about Duane Johnson, the only Kansas State Librarian I have known. It occurred to me that, having studied the history of Topeka I was familiar with Rev. Charles M. Sheldon who, over a century ago, asked the question: "What would Jesus do?" I find myself paraphrasing Rev. Sheldon when considering professional questions—what would Duane do?

What do you say about the respected professional who rode his Harley to a San Francisco ALA conference, then took the shortcut back past the Grand Canyon? Who stripped to his running shorts at an ALA presentation? Who went on vacation to China and came home through international customs with a deceased fellow traveler? Who tried to collect a license plate from the Popemobile and has one from the Kansas county in which he was born from the year he was born? Who has wrestled with e-mail connections in Tanzania? Whose many other adventures make him seem like the Indiana Jones of librarianship?

Then, what do you say about the respected professional who was instrumental in creating the Kansas Library Network Board, and then implemented the Interlibrary Loan Development Program to give the Board some teeth and credibility? Who guided Kansas libraries into the age of information technology? Who found creative ways to pay for READS, for computers in libraries of all sizes, for Internet connections in nearly every library in the state

regardless of size, and for databases to provide for the informational needs of all Kansans? Who patiently and tactfully worked through legislative sessions, through bureaucratic roadblocks, and through personal and professional detours for such things as increases in State Aid and an employment benefits package for all Kansas public librarians? Whose every professional action has been in the interest of the best possible library service for all Kansans?

All I can say is that in 22 years, Duane has provided a legacy for Kansas librarianship, just like the blue carpet that he had installed in Great Bend Public Library and which remains there to this day. He has provided a shining example for all of us to emulate. So for myself, I will from now on ask myself when a professional librarianship issue confronts me, "What would Duane do?"

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"Sweeeet Memories...."

*Patti Butcher
President/First Vice-President
Kansas Library Association*

One of the first lessons I remember learning from Duane was one of the most important: it is not a good idea to discuss Kansas in two parts—western and eastern. Politically, this was truly an important lesson. But it also points up Duane's constant efforts to remember that the state library serves ALL libraries, and not just one part.

I also remember a poignant conversation that we had about being a librarian. Duane said that due to the nature of his work, he had to occasionally just remind himself that he was, after all, "a librarian."

While I was involved with the state library, Duane oversaw a number of leaps forward for Kansas libraries:

- the Blue Skyways website was developed and housed at the KU Med Center Library;
- the Kansas Library Catalog migrated from CD-ROMs to an online system;
- the KICNET calling system was phased out and replaced with an online one;
- database purchases increased, and training was provided around the state.

Since that time, innovative and critical services and programs have been added. Among them are the Kansas Library Card and KanAnswer reference service, the KanGuard service, the Gates Grant projects, and partnering with Kan-Ed.

Duane has supported the Kansas Library Association and the Kansas Library Trustee Association in innumerable ways. He helped in the creation and continuation of the ICE Institute, and has been instrumental in promoting the KLA feasibility study and in contacting influential endorsers.

Duane's ability to work through difficult legislative sessions—and the fact that he served under five governors—is a testament to his diplomacy and his political expertise. The stability and continuity he has provided, not only to the state library and its staff, but to Kansas libraries and librarians, are truly a gift. I know we will treasure his gift for many years to come.

I picture Duane riding off into the Kansas sunset on his motorcycle, looking for puffins to watch. Happy Trails!

No "no" policy

*—by Marc Galbraith
Director, Reference and Information Services*

He never says no, or at least not so often that you'd notice.

In my experience at the State Library, which stretches over a few more years than I'd care to put a number to, Duane has impressed me again and again with his judicious use of the word "no." He has encouraged further cooking of ideas not quite fully baked, and he has always been magnanimous in his willingness to share his acute, and absolutely amazing, sense of knowing what's what. In fact, sometimes he's even said yes to ideas you didn't quite know you had yet if you know what I mean. But he seldom says no, because I think he has always wanted, in a thoughtful and reasoned way, to move forward. Duane has always wanted to make advances that were good for libraries and that, as he frequently reminded me, were good for library users.

He finds a way to make it happen. When the budget has been dismal, and it is easier to remember the years it wasn't, Duane still found ways to make things happen when a good idea or an opportunity beckoned. He found a way to help initiate the financing of statewide databases and he found a way, when it truly looked impossible, to automate the State Library. He didn't do these things magically and he didn't do them alone, but he was able to do these things by working with trusted colleagues who also trusted him.

He knows his colleagues and their needs and aspirations. More than once an astute, non-library, statehouse colleague has remarked to me that Duane Johnson has the most admirable rapport with his fellow librarians. This complement was not a nod to Duane's savvy politics, though we are all aware of Duane's skills in this area. Rather, the complement was for Duane's ability to serve as State Librarian, with all its demanding constraints on time, and still hold what is apparently the personal and the sincere trust of his colleagues, which, in turn, has allowed him to offer a most rare form of leadership.

Duane believes in people and their ability to learn and change, if given an opportunity. One of Duane's little lessons in life to me and to others was "to find the thing that scared you the most and do it." I think he meant it, and if he could help you find that particular challenge and confront it, he would. Duane supported staff development for library employees across the state and at home at the

State Library. But Duane's concern for his staff didn't stop at mentoring, or encouragement or training. Duane didn't say no when you needed help, even if you didn't ask for it.

We'll miss him and his no "no" policy.

Leadership enriched profession

—by Rosanne Siemens
Executive Director
Kansas Library Association

Several years ago I was active in Public Library Association and American Library Association. When I would tell people I was from Kansas, I would often hear, "Oh you have that wonderful State Librarian." Or, I would hear, "If only we could lure your State Librarian to our state!" One time someone said, "Do you know how lucky you are to have Duane Johnson as your State Librarian?" My answer was, "I most certainly do!"

Many times the conversations would continue with impressions or incidents and stories about Duane. I would hear about his unwavering commitment to intellectual freedom, diversity, and most of all his fierce and persistent fight to make the issues surrounding rural libraries known. I would also hear about how he was ahead of the curve, one of the runners out front, when it comes to ways to use technology in our profession that would benefit all libraries in Kansas.

A Chief Officer of State Library Agencies told me that their meetings are often like "herding cats" because each state is so different that it would sometimes be hard to come to agreement. He also told me, however, "Duane always maintained decorum even if he had to stand firm on an issue he believed strongly in. We have accomplished much on a national level, having to blend the personalities in that group, and the personalities of each state, and Duane had a hand on much of that progress."

Later, I had the honor of being elected to the Board of Trustees of the Bibliographic Center for Research. It was during my tenure on that board that I saw first hand Duane's outstanding leadership and how hard he worked on behalf of all libraries. I saw over those several years

how his leadership has enriched our profession greatly. Duane served 18 years on the BCR Board. I am told that his colleagues immediately recognized his talent and elected him president three times. During those years, he energetically supported the development of cost-effective automated services for small libraries and resource sharing programs. He played a major role in the early contractual relationships with BCR and OCLC, supporting the multi-state contracts that followed, saving Kansas and other participating states over two million dollars.

Duane's colleagues all agree that what they will miss most is his humor. Jim Nelson, State Librarian of Kentucky, told me that at an Archives conference in Kentucky he happened to sit next to John Carlin, Archivist of the United States, and a former Governor of Kansas. During a break, Jim asked Governor Carlin, "Do you know my good friend Duane Johnson?" Governor Carlin's eyes opened in excitement and said, "Know him! I appointed him! He was *my* State Librarian!!!" Jim then complimented Governor Carlin on his impeccable choice to head his state library agency. Jim relayed this story to Duane, and Duane's response was (with a chuckle, of course) "John who?" And it was a remarkable choice, because Duane served not only under Governor Carlin, but also under Governors Hayden, Finney, Graves, and Sebelius.

The last quote I would like to share with you is from another library leader in the state of Kansas. During a recent KLA Council meeting with considerable hand wringing over who will ever be able to take Duane's place, the comment was made, "Twenty-two years ago the right person was here, Duane Johnson was clearly the right person for the job." And history has indeed proved that.

