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Spotlight

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## Being Wealthy Means I Have a Lot of Money ... But to Be Really Rich, I Must Find My Dream

By Ann M. Seidl

Have you ever felt that everything in your whole life added up to one gigantic karmic mission? That a dream of yours is precisely why you are here on this planet? That this dream is so important that there is no way you can fail?

That's how I feel about my goal to produce the first documentary film about the image and reality of the people behind America's libraries: librarians and library staff. It's called *The Hollywood Librarian: Librarians in Cinema and Society* and it has been what I wake up every day thinking about and go to sleep dreaming about every night.

Ten years ago, I was 32 years old and I was thrilled about being accepted to library school at the University of Denver. Every time I encountered a librarian I got goose bumps. The reference librarians ... and the Gov Docs librarians (I even loved *saying* "Gov Docs," for heaven's sake) ... the poetic language of the lone cataloger (sigh). In library school, I found out there is such a thing as a medical librarian! And map catalogers. It was bliss.

Librarians were such smart, funny and generous human beings. And I was going to be one! Libraries were a fascinating and complex world right under my nose. I immediately began to feel sorry for everyone who did not work in a library.

How odd, then, when I realized that everyone else feels sorry for us.

I have found a wide gap between the way we see ourselves and the way others see us. In 2002 I was in the middle of a cross-country trip from Tallahassee, FL, to Portland, OR. I was at breakfast at a Denny's in one of the midwestern states and I fell into conversation with two men at the next table. After a little pleasant talk, one of the men asked me what I do for a living. "I'm a librarian," I said. He looked stupefied, and then he asked me, "Oh, do they still have those?"

"They" certainly do. We have more customers than *amazon.com*, move more items than shipping giant FedEx, issue more cards than Visa and operate more outlets than McDonald's. More Americans visit libraries than attend professional sporting events.

Yet, the average person's understanding of the role of library staff in the United States is tiny, and this makes me feel puzzled, indignant and, I confess, outraged. Librarians are somehow hiding in plain sight. I am determined to change that.

I have been working on a documentary for more than 6 years. I conceived the film in 1999 and finished the research and shooting the script in late 2002. I have raised \$110,000 so far and \$75,000 has come from librarians and library organizations.

Bi-Folkal Productions, a non-profit library company headed by Lynne Martin Erickson, is handling the money and payroll as my fiscal sponsor. I assembled a film crew and shot more than fifty hours of footage over eleven months, from March 2005 to February 2006 in California, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Florida, Connecticut, Wisconsin and Illinois. The cinematographers used the Panasonic High Definition Varicam, so the picture quality is superb. The sound engineer, a film and television veteran, also created high quality audio.

This is not just a well-intentioned movie but a serious artistic effort with strong storylines and possible widespread public appeal beyond the near-unanimous support from the international library community.

Comments from librarians and library staff in Brazil, England, Australia, India, Spain, New Zealand, Argentina and other countries make wonderful reading at [www.ultraguest.com/view/1118611276](http://www.ultraguest.com/view/1118611276). Be sure to add your own feedback.

Over the last three years, I have approached EBSCO, Dynix, Highsmith, Demco, TLC, Follett, Scholastic, OCLC, Innovative and BWI for funding. All ultimately said no. I was told no by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) twice and the Gates Foundation once. Despite my best efforts, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has turned me down three times since 2000.

On a personal note, I have not worked at my day job as a library researcher since September 2004 in order to devote myself full time to the film. My savings are spent, and I have cashed in one IRA so far. I have no health insurance and am in a fair amount of personal debt. In July 2005, I invoiced the film budget for exactly four days' work because it was absolutely unavoidable. I am emphatically *not* complaining—I am actually grateful—because this is what it is taking to make my dream come true. I feel rich beyond all expectations.

I once read a quote on the wall of the office of a colleague, on a rather tattered piece of paper, printed in ordinary type on an ordinary printer, "Discipline is nothing more than remembering what you want." At the risk of grossly understating the situation, I am not a particularly disciplined person. But, you see, I want this film more than I have ever wanted anything. I want librarians to want to see it, and librarians themselves want to see it. Library school professors want it for their graduate courses. Library directors and trustees want it to show their governing bodies. And, I believe, the public will want to see it as well.

I am doing offline editing now to shape the total footage down to a more manageable four or five hours, at which point a professional editor will take over.

I have a complete post-production team lined up: a film editor, a sound mixer and a composer for the original score. So, dear reader, the documentary is on the verge of coming together. I am eager to put my full energies toward the final cut and try for a release within nine to twelve months.

"Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid." Dreaming is powerful. Working on a dream is proving to be the most exciting, fulfilling and enriching thing in the world for me. And here's the secret: everyone, everywhere, without exception, has a dream that s/he alone can accomplish. What's yours?

Ann needs to raise another \$90,000 for post-production.

If you would like to be one of the 1,800 people who will sponsor the film for a tax-deductible donation of \$50 each (less than dinner and a movie for two), please go to <a href="http://www.hollywoodlibrarian.com/sponsor">www.hollywoodlibrarian.com/sponsor</a> . Of course, the project will be aided by donations of any amount. Please feel free to view the new five-minute trailer (just a fraction of what the whole film will contain) while you're at <a href="http://www.hollywoodlibrarian.com">www.hollywoodlibrarian.com</a> .
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