



FINE PRINT

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Appleton's Christmas Parade Showcases APL Staff in All Their Dickens Splendor

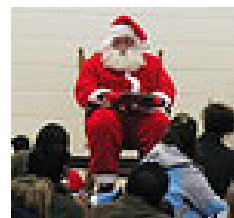


Appleton Public Library staff had a great time marching in the Downtown Appleton Christmas Parade, on November 21st and got a great reaction from the crowd. Though we were not on TV, as they cut to commercial just as we came to the camera, we were seen by more than **50,000** people along the parade route.

The theme of Appleton Public Library's unit this year was; **A Dickens of a Christmas at the Appleton Public Library**. We asked parade watchers to get to know Ebenezer, Bob, Old Fezziwig, Tiny Tim and other characters from Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* a little better this Christmas season, by "checking them out" at the Appleton Public Library! The Appleton Public Library celebrates a tradition of serving Appleton for 109 years. After the parade, the library had over 100 people take part in the Santa storytime back at the library.

Thanks to our parade organizing committee: Michael Kenney, Ellen Jepson, Kathleen Westbrook, Dave Haas & Maureen Ward. A big special thanks to Kathleen for securing the bulk of the costumes and to Susan Rabideau at UW-Fox for the costume loan. Michael Kenney organized a zillion details, and Ellen Jepson hurried back to the library to run the story hour afterwards. OWLS & Beth Carpenter supplied the original library card art and Colleen Rortvedt contributed additional graphics work for the giant library cards.

Intrepid parade marchers included staff, former staff, and members of staff families, including Kathleen's nephew Tony as Tiny Tim and his mom Jean. Others were: Michael "Scrooge" Kenney, Jenni Helen, Julie Weyenberg, Kim Arntzen, Kathleen & Ty Westbrook, Connie Henkel, Joann Jacobson, Maureen Ward, Meg Shriver, Barbara Kelly, Marsha & Terry "Old Fezziwig" Dawson.



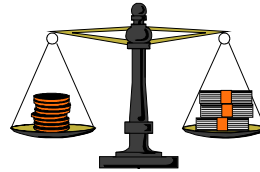
Foundation grant funds paid for printing the giant book cover (used with the publisher's kind permission), banner and giant library cards. These will be on display at the library throughout December.

Thanks to Tony Wieczorek, who made arrangements with his friend Santa to appear at the library and read a story

Library Director Terry Dawson expressed a big thank you to everyone involved for helping make it a great night for the Appleton Public Library, not forgetting those who were here doing their regular shifts providing library service. It got very busy after the parade, with 231 people coming in just between 7:00 & 8:00 PM!

Budget Politics: big and small favors

by Terry Dawson, Library Director



We have said for years that one of our public library's great strengths is the support we receive from the community. This support is expressed in many ways: library use, donations, volunteer hours and — most directly — via our budget. The establishment of any public budget is a fairly intense political process, and rightly so. It's the mechanism which expresses the will of the people for what will be done by public servants with public moneys. This is certainly true for annual municipal budgets; in Appleton, our City budget is the source of nearly all library spending. All the donations and other support, though critical, are a very small percentage of what gets approved in the budget our Mayor develops and is then debated and voted on by the Common Council.

This is neither easy nor taken lightly by any of the parties. Municipalities are restricted by the state's levy restraint law. It doesn't matter how much our service population increases, what the rate of inflation is, or how much library use grows. Under the state law for the past two years, none of this matters as much as the growth in net new construction, which is the controlling factor for the tax levy. We recognize legitimate taxpayer concerns. The city can only spend so much, and can only tax so much, and the Mayor and Council have to deal with many needs. For the 2007 budget in Appleton, there was a priority need to address concerns with city facilities and infrastructure through creation of a new Facilities Management Department for better stewardship of city buildings. To do this required sacrifices in other areas. Thus the library had numerous supplies and equipment cut and 1.1 full-time equivalent positions cut, requiring us to lay some people off. Our materials budget will remain flat for a third year.

Looking forward, we see many challenges. The library continues to see record-breaking use and therefore more complaints about long check-out lines. Continued growth in circulation, a shrinking staff and a flat materials budget make it difficult to maintain the quality services the public expects. Our October 2006 checkouts were 38% higher than October 2000, and yet in 2007 we will have a smaller staff and a book budget that puts fewer new titles on the shelves. It is sometimes difficult for the staff not to become discouraged when work keeps getting harder and quality may suffer despite our best efforts. People would like to reserve more materials, but limits on materials and staff time, in the face of rising demand, have forced us to restrict the number of items anyone can have on hold. What can we do, beyond hoping for a more sophisticated levy restraint statute from the state, making life easier for cities? I see several things we can and should do:

1. Keep it in perspective, on a couple of fronts.

We know the library is vital to this community. The library staff knows this every time we see a child walking out our doors carrying a book, every time we help a business, every time people gather here to meet as groups, attend programs, or discuss issues. We're proud to be open to everyone. We're proud to live in a free society, where issues of public funding and policy are subject to public debate and ultimately, the ballot box. We're proud to be part of that freedom — as Thomas Jefferson famously said: "Information is the currency of democracy." And we understand that the

community values these things: in a recent APL survey, over 85% of our users said that libraries are "essential to the quality of life." In some respects, Appleton is doing better than many municipalities in Wisconsin — in large part due to conservative budgeting practices which sometimes chafe — but which mean that our library has had fewer cuts than some other cities and villages. Wisconsin as a whole is doing better by their libraries than a lot of other states. These are hard times in the public sector; we need to live with that. But we've not had massive layoffs nor closed our doors.

...continued

...budget continued

2. Work smarter. There may not be fat on the bone, and we may be cutting to the bone, but there are always choices to make. As public servants, we cannot be all things to all people or do everything every user would like us to do, but we do the best we can. Sometimes we just have to say no, and recognize our limits as individuals and as an institution. As we work next year to develop a new long-range plan for the future, the Library Board of Trustees, which sets our policies and directions, will take a hard look at service priorities.

3. More volunteers. We've increased our number of volunteer hours by 50% from last year, and we need to do more. We rely on volunteers to help with our programs, assist with shelving and do many data entry projects. Volunteers help with fund-raising efforts, deliver books to the homebound, help with plants in the atrium and collect books for children during the holidays. For years we've relied on the members of the Friends of Appleton Library for their help; in the current environment the members of our friends group are even more important.

4. Better technology. Surely computers have transformed the way libraries work, and we know that the Internet has made us busier, not less busy. But our automated circulation system and online catalog are simultaneously productivity tools and the source of new service demands as more people request items from home or office, then stop in to collect them. We spend a lot of time retrieving these requested materials. More use of self-check machines will allow us to keep up with increased checkouts without increased staff. We're looking at ways to improve our website to more effectively deliver information, and studying other technologies such as radio frequency identification (RFID), which offer some promise of saving labor.

5. More donations and other revenue. No, this doesn't mean increasing the fines! We are blessed with a Library Foundation which gives grants from their endowment fund to provide "the extra edge of excellence" in library service. This allows us to provide programs and materials that would otherwise be impossible in a tight budget. The challenge is to provide this extra edge of

excellence when we're struggling to maintain basic services. Fortunately we also have a good partnership with the Outagamie Waupaca Library System, which helps provide compensation from counties and provides collaborative services to Appleton and other member libraries.

6. Market our services for efficiency and awareness. Marketing doesn't mean heavy advertising to bring more people through our doors and increase checkouts. Marketing means creating awareness so more people use services self-sufficiently, having more attendance at programs, and generally getting as much service impact as we can for every tax dollar: more bang for the buck. Marketing should work to increase support by volunteers and donors. Marketing should also create more awareness by decision-makers of what the library does and how it's used, which we hope will lead to better informed budget decisions.

7. Count our blessings and appreciate big and small favors. Though this has been a difficult budget year and we're sometimes scratching our heads about how to provide more service with fewer resources, we have many reasons to be thankful. Our Friends, Foundation, Library Board, and elected officials are all capable, caring and conscientious. We have a good budget from the City, even if it hasn't grown as fast as demands. We're still open seven days a week during the school year and serve thousands of people every day. And even small favors can count a lot. At the eleventh hour of the budget deliberations, the City Council added back \$2,000 that had been trimmed from our Circulation budget. That money will allow us to hire five to six hours per week of shelving time, meaning thousands more books back on the shelf. Every bit helps and we're thankful for small favors as for the big ones.

Mostly, we keep going!

The times may be challenging, but the work is important and rewarding. I'm proud of every member of our staff: they're doing their best to provide excellent library service to this community, to keep people connected with information, ideas, and each other.



BIBLIO-TECH TOPICS

by Barbara Kelly, Assistant Director



Index to the Post-Crescent

Staff members at the Appleton Public Library are working hard every week to produce and maintain an index to our local newspaper so that present and future researchers will be able to find stories relating to important events in our community. Reference staff identify important articles, and then input the information into a database which can be searched via the Internet. It is a constant effort, with the goal of having the information current within a week or two of appearing in the paper.

You can find the index online at
<http://www.apl.org/pcindex/index.asp>

The Appleton paper began publishing on February 10, 1853 and has published continuously to the present time under several different names including its current name, *The Post-Crescent*. Various librarians at the Appleton Public Library have selectively indexed the paper over a number of years. Their intent was to make significant current and historical information available rather than to provide comprehensive indexing of the local paper.

There are no remaining guidelines for the indexing prior to 1981 to furnish clues on how events were chosen for inclusion in the index. The majority of entries for the years 1853 to the end of 1919 are sporadic and many were added at a later time when librarians happened on reports of noteworthy events while looking for other information such as an obituary. The selective index for the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s covered primarily city and county events. The entries for these early years also included the obituaries for prominent local people. While there is indexing for the 1950s, it is uneven with large gaps in the coverage. The entries for 1960s and the 1970s covered local politics, crime, notable people as well as other significant events in Appleton and the surrounding area.

From 1981 to 1983, the index began to also include statewide legal and political stories that were thought to have widespread ramifications

along with the noteworthy city and county events. The index also expanded to cover key stories from areas beyond the city and the county. The greater index coverage ends in December of 1983 when it became too labor intensive to produce. Beginning in 1984 until December of 1995 a *Current Events Calendar* provided access to *The Post-Crescent*. The calendar listed in chronological order significant occurrences in local affairs, such as prominent murders, deaths of local officials, and elections of local citizens to state office.

Beginning in January of 1994, the index has been produced electronically. There was a one year overlap when the *Current Events Calendar* and electronic index existed together. With a grant from the [Appleton Library Foundation](#), the Appleton Library staff was able to make the original electronic index available and searchable from our homepage. Upon completion of a retrospective project in 1999 the selective index from 1853 forward was converted to electronic format and was also made available from our homepage.

The current newspaper index is a selective index with an emphasis on local politics, major community events, important social issues, prominent local people, local businesses and organizations, and education. **The index does not generally cover:** obituaries, crime, sports, State news, national/international news, cartoons and comics, advertisements.

The library also cooperates with the Outagamie Waupaca Library System, the Kimberly/LittleChute Public Library and the Kaukauna Public Library to bring our cardholders access to an online service called *Newsbank*. *Newsbank* includes the complete full-text content of local and regional news, including community events, schools, politics, government policies, cultural activities, local companies, state industries, and people in the community. From outside of the library *Newsbank* is available to Appleton and OWLS library card holders only. A library card number will be needed to log in. You can find more information and a link to *Newsbank* at <http://www.apl.org/pcindex/fulltext.html>

December 2006 - February 2007 Adult Programs @APL



APL Exhibits Through December 29 APL Staff Artisans:

- Kathy Beck, quilting and rubber stamping
 - Maureen Ward, knitting and felting
 - Mary Campbell-cross stitching and smocking
- January 2-February 28**
- Greg Bracken, watercolors, oils, and pastels

Creative Journey

10:30am - 12:00noon
December
12 Holiday Party

January

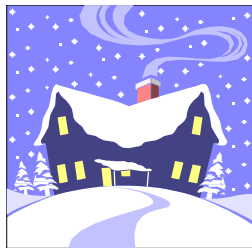
- 2 Creative Activities:
Letters to Myself
- 9 Creative Activities:
Lists of 100
- 16 Members' Stories
- 23 *The Creative Journal*
- 30 *Art21: Power*

February

- 6 Field Trip: 10:00-12:00
Aromatherapy Class
at Botanical Indulgences
- 13..... Anniversary Party
and Poetry Reading
- 20..... Members' Stories
- 27..... *The Creative Journal*

Writing Matters 1:30 - 3:00pm

January 3 Critiques
February 7 Writing to Prompts



Friends of Books 1:00-2:00pm

- Dec. 13** *A Wedding in December*
by Anita Shreve
- Jan. 10** *The End of the Affair*
by Graham Greene
- Feb. 14**..... *Madame Bovary*
by Gustave Flaubert

Science Issues in the News 1:00-2:30pm

February 13, 20, 27 and March 6.
Watch for upcoming Topics

Non-Fiction Book Discussions 7:00-8:00pm

January 3
*The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside
America's Pursuit of its Enemies Since 9/11*
by Ron Suskind

February 7
"Take your Pick" Choose a book by
Garrison Keillor to share with the group

Music@theAtrium 7:00-8:00pm

February 28 7-8pm
Local talent in the library atrium
Beyond Bad Bad Leroy Brown:
The Music of Jim Croce
and Maury Muehleisen
Musicians: Chris Murray and Mark Young



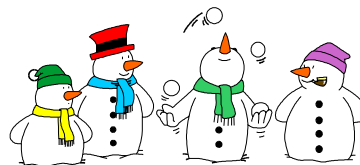
TEENS AT APL

In October we had two very successful programs during Teen Read Week. The first was a presentation by Castle Art and Import on *Henna Body Art*. After learning the history and safe ways to use henna, the teens chose a henna design which was drawn for them.

Our second Teen Read Week program was *Jewelry Beading*. The Bead Garden provided the expertise and kits to choose from. We had a “sold-out” crowd, and the teens left wearing some beautiful jewelry which they had made.

The newest issue of Teen Voices has original poetry and a book review, all written by local teens. Check out the site at teen.apl.org and choose **Teen Voices**. Not only can you view the latest creations, you can view past issues too.

In December we will be hosting the Madrigal Holiday Concert by the West High Concerti Singers. They will be performing throughout the main floor of the library on Tuesday, December 12, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.



Anime showings continue with *Samurai 7* on January 16, and *DN Angel: Dawn of Dark* on February 20. The shows start at 6:30 and last about 2 hours (approximately 4 episodes). They are free, and take place in the lower level meeting room on Tuesday nights.

We have also started a collection of Hmong language materials for teens. Look for them on the outside of the TeenLink area, next to the Spanish language books and the newest teen fiction.

Winter

Fine Print

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Outagamie Waupaca Library System

Children's Paperback Series You Should Try:



Underland Chronicles Collins

When eleven-year-old Gregor and his two-year-old sister are pulled into a strange underground world, they trigger an epic battle involving men, bats, rats, cockroaches, and spiders while on a quest foretold by ancient prophecy.

Adventures of the Bailey School kids Dadey

There are some pretty weird grown-ups living in Bailey City, the kids suspect that the grown ups are monsters so they investigate to discover the truth.

Hank the Cowdog Erickson

Hank the Cowdog, Head of Ranch Security, collects clues to solve mysteries as he springs into action to keep the ranch safe.

Knights of the Silver Dragon.....Graham

“A young thief. A wizard’s apprentice. A twelve-year old boy. Meet the Knights of the Silver Dragon! If your name appears on the Dagger of Doom, you’re marked for death. Or so the legend says. No one has seen the weapon for hundreds of years, until Kellach discovers a knife with his own name burned in the blade...”

Prairie River.....Gregory

Nessa can’t remember a home other than the orphanage, and now she has no choice but to leave. Her plan is to escape on the next stagecoach west—one headed toward Prairie River, Kansas, a town in the middle of nowhere...” Christian fiction

Spirit of the Game.....Hafer

An eighth-grade basketball player finds his training, both physical and spiritual, put to the test too soon after his mother’s death. Christian fiction

Red Rock Mysteries Jenkins

Bryce and Ashley Timberline are normal 13-year-old twins, except for one thing – they discover action-packed mysteries everywhere.

On the Run.....Korman

Aidan and Meg Falconer are their parents’ only hope. The Falconers are facing life in prison — unless Aidan and Meg can follow a trail of clues to prove their innocence.

Guardians of Ga’Hoole.....Lasky

The story’s fast pace, menacing bad guys, and flashes of humor make this a good choice for reluctant readers, while the underlying message about the power of legends provides a unifying element and gives strong appeal for fantasy fans.

Screech Owls.....MacGregor

The Screech Owls, a group of multi-ethnic and differently abled children, solve mysteries and play hockey.

PendragonMacHale

Bobby Pendragon is a seemingly normal fourteen-year-old boy. But there is something very special about Bobby. He is going to save the world.

Royal Ballet SchoolMoss

Looks at a typical year in the daily lives, studies, and training of students at England’s Royal Ballet School.

Magic Tree House.....Osborne

Eight-year-old Jack and his younger sister Annie find a magic tree house, which whisks them back in time where they have a new adventure each time enter the tree house.

A to Z mysteries..... Roy

Dink Duncan and his two friends investigate a new mystery in each book. The books are written in Alphabetical order.

My Side of the Story..... Ruby

Contains two stories, each telling the story from another point of view. These stories are based on historical events.

Winning SeasonWallace

This series is based on various sports. The students learn the value of sportsmanship and teamwork.

TOP SECRET
Thursdays are Cool After School
at Appleton Public Library Children's Services!



For school age students (Kindergarten – Sixth Grade)

Looking for something different to do after school? Check out the Thursdays Are Cool After School Specials in Children's Services at the Appleton Public Library. A different "club" meets each week. Students (grades K – 6) can join friends old and new to make crafts, discuss books, enjoy a party, watch a movie and play board games.

First Thursdays

(Jan. 4, Feb. 1, Mar. 1)

Book It Club

Learn the secret handshake and password for club members only. Club members will help tell stories using puppets, props, and instruments. Get your ticket punched each time you come to Book It.

Second Thursdays

(Dec. 14, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, Mar. 8)

Author Parties

Celebrate authors or book characters with games, worksheet, crafts, book discussions or other activities centered on a new theme each month. Monthly themes are:



- Dec.Pokemon
- Jan.Baby Mouse
- Feb.Dragonology
- Mar.Captain Underpants

Programs begin at 3:45 and last about 45 minutes. Programs offered free of charge.

An after school snack is provided. Phone: 832-6187 <http://kids.apl.org>

Third Thursdays

(Dec. 21, Jan. 18, Feb. 15, Mar. 15)

Create a Craft

Listen to a story and then create a craft project to take home. Great for students who like art and craft projects, we provide all supplies for the projects.

Fourth Thursdays

(Jan. 25, Feb. 22, Mar. 22)

Movie Madness and Games Galore!

Come and watch a full length movie on our big screen. Play board games and card games like UNO. Challenge your friends. Movie clues will be provided ahead of time so students can guess what movies we will be showing. (Movies will average 75-90 minutes)

Fifth Thursdays (March 29)

A Mystery...awaits at the library!

Find clues in books, on bookshelves, and in the computer catalog to solve a Library Scavenger Hunt!

**What You Do Helps
Your Child Get Ready To Read!**

Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write. The six skills your child can begin learning now are print motivation, print awareness, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and narrative skills. To celebrate learning these skills, the Children's Services Section is offering "My First Reading Program", a fun activity program for babies and toddlers 0 to 24 months and their caregivers. Caregivers complete ten easy activities with their child and earn a prize, as well as a memento for the child's baby book. Parents and grandparents are encouraged to stop in at the Family Reader's Advisory Desk to sign up their child or grandchild for the program. If there are questions about this program, or about early literacy skills, please contact Ellen Jepson, Preschool Services Librarian, at 832-6187 or ejepson@apl.org.

**Fun Board Books to share with your
baby or toddler:**



- Moo Baa La La La** by Sandra Boynton
- Goodnight Moon** by Margaret Wise Brown
- Daddy Kisses** by Anne Gutman
- Mommy Hugs** by Anne Gutman
- Mary had a Little Lamb** by Sarah Hale
- Black on White** by Tana Hoban
- Strawberries are Red** by Petr Horacek
- Zoom City** by Thacher Hurd
- Row Row Row Your Boat** by Annie Kubler
- How Kind** by Mary Murphy
- I Kissed the Baby** by Mary Murphy
- I See** by Helen Oxenbury
- Big Dog and Little Dog** by Dav Pilkey
- Skidamarink! I Love You** by Michael Scott
- Baby Dance** by Ann Taylor
- You are my Perfect Baby** by Joyce Carol Thomas

APL's 2007 Community Read Spurs an Initiative Focusing on Fox Cities' Poverty

Leaders from throughout the Fox Cities are coming together to raise awareness of poverty in our area through an effort called Project Promise.



Project Promise is centered around the reading of the book chosen by Appleton Public Library patrons and Fox Cities residents as 2007's Community Read selection, *"Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America"* by **New York Times best-selling author Barbara Ehrenreich**. In the book, she details her story of what it was like to sustain herself as a minimum waged worker for months at a time. The journalist shares her story of working a series of low-paying jobs in 1999 and 2000. By telling her story, Ehrenreich grabs readers' attention, showing them what daily life is often like for the millions of American residents who work at low-wage jobs while trying to make ends meet.

As part of the initiative, libraries throughout the Fox Cities, led by the Appleton Public Library and including Neenah, Menasha, Kimberly/Little Chute and Kaukauna, are encouraging everyone to read the book while leaders from the public and private sectors hope to spark discussion on poverty in the Fox Cities and ways it can be eradicated.

Beginning in January, Project Promise will include library talks and discussion groups about "Nickel and Dimed," diversity circles and poverty simulations to engage community members on what it's like to live in poverty, and education programs on how people can better manage their finances.

The book may be checked out at Appleton Public Library, at one of the participating libraries, or purchased at Conkey's Bookstore in downtown Appleton and other bookstores throughout the Valley. If you'd like to be part of a book read, please feel free to contact the APL reference area at 832-6173. The Community Read will culminate with a visit by Ehrenreich to the Appleton Public Library for a public presentation on Tuesday, April 17, 2007.

Project Promise is being sponsored by the Appleton Library Foundation, CHAT (Community Health Action Team) and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Other groups providing in-kind donations include CAP Services, the Rotary Multicultural Center, FISC, Appleton Public Library and ThedaCare.

For more information, visit the Project Promise website at: www.projectpromisefoxcities.org, or www.foxcitiesreads.org.

I Love My Library



Fundraising Dinner

On Sunday, February 11, 2007, the return of one of Appleton's "tastiest" events of the year takes place. The *Appleton Library Foundation* is again providing an excellent opportunity for library lovers to celebrate Valentines Day a few days early and support their library, by sponsoring the third annual ***I Love My Library Fundraising Dinner*** at Riverview Country Club in Appleton.

Individual seats for this fundraising event may be purchased for \$100. For that investment, attendees can enjoy live musical entertainment provided again this year by library staff members Karen Probst, piano and Colleen Rortvedt, vocalist, sip cocktails (cash bar) and bid on some wonderful silent auction items beginning at 5:00 pm, followed by a lovely dinner at 6:30 pm.

"This is a great opportunity to enjoy an elegant evening while showing your financial support for the wonderful services, programs and collections the Appleton Public Library provides our community," stated Tom Williams, President of the Appleton Library Foundation, and chairperson for this event.

Funds generated by this event will help support special events, programs and workshops, as well as library materials, technology, equipment, author appearances and readings not supported by the city's budget.

Corporation participation is key to this event, and they are asked to express their support for the library and community by sponsoring tables of eight for \$1,000.

The evening will celebrate the many fine services the Appleton Public Library provides. "Attendees' participation in this event supports the library's future, by giving it an extra edge of excellence. We are genuinely appreciative of the Foundation's sponsorship of the *I Love My Library* event as it helps us with the means to supply materials and services we might otherwise be unable to provide through our public funding," concluded Appleton Public Library Director Terry Dawson.

Library Interview

In an effort to build bridges between library employees and the public they serve, this column will occasionally provide interviews with the library staff. Our first interview was conducted with a member of the Reference Department. To protect his privacy, we'll call him "Fred"



Q: Welcome, "Fred."

Thanks for sitting down with us.

Fred: Glad to do it, but what's with the "Fred" bit. My name is—

Q: Ah-ah-ah! We're trying to protect your identity.

Fred: By calling me "Fred"? What kind of dopey name is that?

Q: But we're trying to—

Fred: How about something more macho, like "Dirk" or "Brick" or "Slab"?

Q: You really want to be called "Slab"?

Fred: Well, then maybe something more descriptive, like "Master of Reference" or "Supreme Source of All Wisdom" or "Library God"? Yeah, that has a nice ring to it, "Librar—"

Q: What if we stick with "Fred"?

Fred: Okay, fine. But could we at least lose the wimpy quotation marks?

Q: Sure.

Fred: Thank you. I feel ten pounds lighter.

Q: You're welcome. Now, tell us what you do here at the library?

Fred: Sure. My main task is to work at the Reference Desk, answering questions and helping the public to find the materials they're seeking.

Q: That sounds like a challenging job.

Fred: You have no idea! Those stools we sit on are the most uncomfortable things ever. And they creak something awful. When I shift around trying to find a comfy spot, it sounds like a herd of mice being attacked by an alley cat. I tell you, it's just one squeak after another—

Q: I meant intellectually challenging.

Fred: Oh, sure. That too.

Q: How do you find the answers to the questions you're asked?

Fred: There are many different resources. We have a full collection of reference books, access to many databases, periodical indexes, the Internet, under seat cushions - everywhere!

Q: What do you do if you still can't find an answer?

Fred: We just make something up.

Q: What?!

Fred: Only kidding! We would never make something up. The delivery of precise and accurate information is very important to us. In fact, we are proud to have an answer accuracy rate of 98.2%.

Q: That's an impressive figure. How was it arrived at?

Fred: I just made it up.

Q: Uh, could you tell us a little about your background. Where did you go to school?

Fred: I'm a graduate of the Topeka School of Kaleidoscopic Technology and Scientific Knowledge.

Q: TSK TSK?

Fred: Huh? What's wrong? What'd I do?

Q: No, the acronym of your school, it's TSK TSK.

Fred: Is it really? Well, how 'bout that!

Q: You didn't know?

Fred: No idea. Before that, I went to the California Regional Applied Polytechnic. Let's see, that'd be—

Q: Moving along, what was your major in school?

Fred: Apple bobbing.

Q: Excuse me?

Fred: It's much harder than it looks, you know. Of course, it wasn't terribly practical, which is why I had a minor to fall back on.

Q: I'm not sure I want to ask—

Fred: Toaster repair. No matter what, people will always want their toast!

Q: I suppose so.

Fred: With a broken toaster, you're in a real jam.

Q: Uh, if we could—

Fred: Get it? Toast-jam. Pretty good, huh? That one used to crack us up back in school.

Q: Yes, thank you. But tell me, how did you end up in library work?

Fred: Well, my dream job was to drive the target car in demolition derbies, but when that didn't work out, libraries seemed like the next closest thing.

Q: How long have you worked at the library?

Fred: What time is it now?

Q: It's 10:14.

Fred: Then I've been here 18 years.

Q: Speaking of time, unfortunately ours is now up.

Fred: Already? But I didn't get to tell you about my years driving the Oscar Meyer Weinermobile. They used to call me a real hot dogger—

Q: Some other time perhaps—

Fred: Or my stint with the flea circus. I was really scratching out a living then, let me tell you—

Q: Sorry, we have to end now.

Fred: I was in the military, too. 'Course, it wasn't *our* military, advancement is so much quicker in the Bolivian Navy—

Q: Isn't Bolivia a land-locked country?

Fred: No kiddin'? Well, that explains a lot—

Q: I appreciate your—

Fred: Don't you want to hear about the time we started the rhubarb patch behind the Reference Desk?

Q: Thank you so much—

Fred: Dang boll weevils got in here somehow—

Q: Goodbye!