



Library podcast

Jodee Fenton and Paula Becker

[00:00:00] Paula Becker: I've lived here now in Seattle and used the Seattle Public Libraries for 20 years, and I've seen development in the thinking of how the organization can circulate books and that's great, and that's how most people use it. And then it also could be a place that treasures that don't circulate that are precious, are stored but that anybody can walk in off the street and say, "Show me that brochure from the Education Building at the 1909 Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition," or they don't even have to say, "Show it to me," they can walk into the Seattle Room and find it on the shelf, and pick it up and look at it, you know, and that's just one example. That's really, really important that people understand that they have that power to find that treasure in the library themselves.

[00:00:49] Jodee Fenton: The smallest book in the library is a little teeny, teeny, tiny thing less than the size of your little fingernail and it's handwritten prayers in this wonderful little book that's in a little plastic container in a little like ring box, and then in another box, and then in another box. And whenever I get a child who's being dragged up to the Seattle Room by a parent, I always ask them if they want to see this smallest book in the library, and, of course, they do. And we open up all the boxes, and it's quite a ceremony to get down to finally to this tiny, tiny little book. And without fail, every child puts their finger right on the book.

[00:01:32] PB: (laughs) Of course.

[00:01:33] JF: Of course. And there's such power in that little, tiny artifact for that child. It's wonderful-

[00:01:39] PB: Yeah, and that's actually wonderful when you describe it because it's a perfect metaphor for what finding information is like in the library, it is like unwrapping a present. And you know, however large or small that piece of information is, if it's something that you've been looking for it is a gift that you find that day.

[00:01:56] JF: It's amazing, yeah, yeah. And of course, when that happens for any of us on our side of the desk, it just made our day. It's just like the best thing.

[00:02:04] PB: Right. Because you know you've gotten that kid hooked. I mean I think that's part of what is, oh, gosh, so important in getting children really into the library because you can teach them how to be very smart about the way they use the Internet for searching for information, you can teach them what are good resources and bad, and how to you know discriminate between those. But you --

(laughs) unless they come in, and they have that thrill when, for example, they've learned about the Denny Party, right, and they were Seattle founders, but that you can go into, in this case, the University of Washington Special Collections and you can request Arthur Denny's diary that he kept as they were coming across the Oregon Trail, and it gets brought to your table, and you get to put, you put some gloves on, you get to hold that in your hands. And one of my kids did that when he was 12 and was working on a project, and I think, you know, it brings history to you in such an immediate way. This isn't a book that was published about it, you know. This isn't something that you found on a Google search. This is the book that that guy took a pencil out every night and wrote in, and that is so cool and so important.

[00:03:20] [MUSIC]