



Jaime Valdez/Portland Tribune

Jennifer Patterson, Oregon's new state librarian, stands in the stacks of the Oregon State Library.

# Patterson makes the case for libraries

New librarian takes on role

By MARK MILLER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Jennifer Patterson loves libraries. She always has, she says.

Now, she's Oregon's state librarian — the person in charge of supporting every library in the state, as well as managing the State Library and helping legislators and state agencies with research, reference materials and anything else a library can provide.

"What I love about libraries is that they provide access," Patterson said. "They're all about providing access to everyone ... and to anyone who is interested in either the entertainment value that libraries can bring, the educational impact they can bring, the career opportunities that libraries bring by providing access to information and resources."

Officially, the only qualification for the job is experience and training in the library field. But in reality, it's a role that is hard to prepare for because it is so unique.

If you go to the Salem Public Library, for instance, you'll find families checking out books to read, older students studying or spending time with friends, adults using computers to apply for jobs or housing, and more.

The State Library, located across Court Street from the Capitol, has little of that activity. The stacks are filled with congressional reports, conference summaries and other such tomes — some of which date back to the Revolutionary War. There are conference rooms, and a small library with audiobooks, which see some public use. Patterson said she works with state officials and other libraries in a way that she never has before.

"I'm still getting my bearings," Patterson said.

Gov. Kate Brown appointed Patterson to a position that had been vacant for more than a year, after MaryKay Dahlgreen was fired in March 2018. Patterson started May 13.

Patterson comes to Salem after a career split between Los Angeles, northern Colorado and the Seattle area. She's never lived or worked in Oregon, but she is familiar with the state because her father and stepmother moved to Portland when she was a preteen.

"I would come out every summer," Patterson said. "Once I moved to the Seattle area, I'd come down to Portland frequently for holidays and family events."

Patterson grew up in Fort Collins, Colorado, about half an hour south of the Wyoming state line. She got her bachelor's degree at the University of Northern Colorado.

Patterson started as an ele-

mentary school teacher after college but she found herself attracted more to working in the school library. Her focus continued to shift, as she worked as a children's librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library and earning a master's degree in library and information science from UCLA in 1999.

Patterson never ended up working in a school library, even after moving back to Colorado and then to the Seattle area, where she spent the past decade and a half. The closest she came was serving as an associate dean at Edmonds Community College north of Seattle, the last job she held before being appointed as Oregon's state librarian.

## Crash course

Since her appointment, Patterson has gotten a crash course on Oregon, its government, its libraries and more. She has yet to replace the décor in her second-story office, simply adding to it with two pieces of artwork by her daughter, Maisie. She's

*'WHAT I LOVE ABOUT LIBRARIES IS THAT THEY PROVIDE ACCESS.'*

Jennifer Patterson | Oregon's state librarian

still finding her way around the labyrinthine building.

"There is so much hiding back here," Patterson said.

So far, she's made a good impression.

Caren Agata was interim state librarian after Dahlgreen's dismissal and has stayed on as a program manager.

Having done the work, Agata understands the job Patterson now holds.

"I think first and foremost, you have to understand librarianship and the field of library science," Agata said.

The State Library also has a leadership role among Oregon's libraries. It provides grants and trains librarians and library trustees.

"It also involves sharing our story and promoting what we do," Agata said, adding, "People take libraries for granted, because they just assume they'll be there."

The search for a new state librarian took time, Agata said, but she thinks it has yielded a "wonderful, wonderful result." Patterson is experienced, smart and "very steady," she said, and she's glad to be working with her.

"I would say that her hit a home run, ultimately," Agata said.

Esther Moberg, president of the Oregon Library Association, is also getting to know Patterson.

"The Oregon Library

Association is excited to have her on board at the State Library," Moberg, the director for the Seaside Public Library, told Oregon Capital Bureau.

When Patterson finds any spare time — even as she worked at Edmonds Community College and applied to become state librarian last year, she was working on a master's in public administration — she enjoys reading and hiking.

She divides her time between Salem and Kenmore, Washington, just outside Seattle. Her husband, Ryan Patterson, has a counseling practice and their daughter is in her senior year of high school. Patterson has been making the nearly five-hour drive up to Kenmore on Friday nights, returning to Salem for the workweek.

"We'll revisit things after a while here," said Patterson, who also has three cats and a dog at home in Washington.

Patterson is getting to know her new environs, as well.

"I've had such a warm welcome from both the State Library employees but also the library community," Patterson said. "The library community has been very welcoming. I'm really excited to see that and to start getting to work with the library community here."

## Governor appoints

The Legislature changed the law in 2015 so that the governor appoints the state librarian. Before that, the State Library Board of Trustees appointed the librarian.

Patterson is one in a long line of state librarians in Oregon, which began with Cornelia Marvin in 1913. The State Library itself was built during the Great Depression as a public works project, like the Capitol.

As state officials and library managers, Patterson and Agata said they know they have to make a case for libraries in an age when information is readily available online and books can be downloaded to laptops, tablet computers and smartphones.

Patterson said that while she enjoys leafing through a book, she likes the convenience of e-books, and they make up much of her reading.

To that end, the State Library now conducts much of its training via webinar. It also maintains online databases and digital collections, although it takes "a lot of time and effort and dollars," as Patterson put it, to digitize written publications.

"Working in libraries is very fulfilling," Patterson said. "You get the opportunity to see firsthand the impact that libraries can have. In all of the positions that I've had, I've had those type of opportunities to hear from people about what libraries mean to them, what they've been able to accomplish because of the services that libraries provide."

# Alzheimer's disease and Dementia ARE YOU AT RISK?

According to a new study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging, men and women with hearing loss are much more likely to develop Dementia and Alzheimer's disease. People with severe hearing loss, the study reports, were 5 times more likely to develop Dementia than those with normal hearing.

## Have you noticed a change in your ability to remember?

*"The more hearing have, the greater the likelihood of developing Dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Hearing aids could delay or prevent Dementia by improving the patient's hearing."*

- 2011 Study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging

## IS IT TIME FOR A HEARING TEST? TAKE THIS QUIZ TO FIND OUT...

Y N

- Do you feel that people mumble or do not speak clearly?
- Do you turn the TV up louder than others need to?
- Do family or friends get frustrated when you ask them to repeat themselves?
- Do you have trouble understanding the voices of women and small children when they are speaking?
- Is it hard to follow the conversation in noisy place like parties, crowded restaurants or family get-togethers?

if you've answered "Yes" to any one of these questions, there's good news! Miracle-Ear can help! Don't wait another moment. Call us today.

*"Hearing loss, left untreated, can lead to serious problems such as loneliness and isolation."*

## FREE PUBLIC SERVICE

**3-Days Only! All of the test are FREE!**

*Free*

**Your hearing will be electronically tested\*** and you will be shown how your hearing compares to normal hearing.

*Free*

**Your ears will be examined with a video otoscope\*** to determine if your hearing problem may be excess wax.

*Free*

**In-store demonstration of the newest Miracle-Ear technology** so you can hear the improvement for yourself!

**OFFER ENDS June 7th**

**Don't Wait! Call and make your appointment now!**

**Code: 19JunAlzheimer**

**Miracle-Ear®**

**Special Notice State Employees.**

**You may qualify for a hearing aid benefit up to \$4,000 every 4 years.**

**Call for eligibility status.**

**173 S. Hwy. 101  
Warrenton, OR. 97146  
(503) 836-7921**

**2505 Main Ave. N. Ste. C  
Tillamook, OR 97141  
(503) 836-7926**

**visit us online at:  
www.miracle-ear.com**

Hearing tests are always free. Hearing test is an audiometric test to determine proper amplification needs only. Hearing Aids do not restore natural hearing. Individual experiences will vary depending on severity of loss, accuracy of evaluation by our Consultant, proper fit, and the ability to adjust amplification. Pursuant to terms of your purchase agreement, the aids must be returned within 30 days of completion of fitting, in satisfactory condition for a full refund.