



Retired Goldendale librarian Naomi Fisher, left, hands the library keys to new librarian Amy King Schoppert.

Retired Librarian Begins New Chapter

Naomi Fisher says she looks forward connecting the public with Goldendale's library

By Jeanie Senior

Naomi Fisher passed the reins in December after 20 years as Goldendale community's librarian. She is now going on the road, employed by the Fort Vancouver Regional Library District as the half-time outreach librarian for Klickitat County.

Naomi says she is happy to move to a 20-hour work week and the newly created post intended to expand the library district's reach to patrons.

"Basically, the concept is to take library services outside the walls of the buildings," Naomi says.

Her territory is Klickitat County's 1,904 square miles, from Mount Adams south to the Columbia River, from the White Salmon River east to Bickleton and Alderdale.

"I'll be out in the communities teaching computer classes, at fairs and farmers markets signing people up for library cards, and networking with the service clubs," Naomi says. "I'll show people how to use the library website and how to take classes online."

The plan is to take all types of library services out to where people are already gathering, Naomi says.

"One of my passions is to connect people to the library, as much as possible to make it easy for them to use," she says. "I hope to advocate for diversifying the way we serve the community."

Extending services to the community always has been part of a librarian's job, but Fort Vancouver Library District decided in 2015 to emphasize outreach and adapt to how people live today, Naomi says.

"Adults are very busy, and looking for services to come to them," she says.

The library's popular bookmobile service will continue to deliver books to outlying communities.

Naomi says she wants to spend time in the far reaches of the county, finding what library services would be most relevant to residents there.

"The bookmobile is great outreach, but it's every other week for two hours in the middle of the working day—not something that can reach everybody," she says. "I want to make sure people have the ability to access things electronically 24-7 over the website, including live reference questions."

Naomi says the library's shift in technology has marked her last 20 years in Goldendale.



Naomi and Friends of the Library member Judith St. Pierre look through books donated for the Friends of the Library book sale. As the new Goldendale Community librarian, Amy will oversee the 2017 library renovation. She brings with her experience from The Dalles Library and the King County Library System.

“When I arrived, they had just recently gone to a computer-based catalog, getting rid of the card files,” Naomi says. “Now we’ve seen the transition to a web-based catalog and a full-service website with streaming, downloadable files.”

And while librarians have become expert in online searches, “we’re also teaching people how to find information,” she says. “We’re teaching computer classes, how to use ebook readers. There’s a lot of technology-oriented teaching and information.”

The library district also offers downloadable ebooks and magazines as well as music, movies and TV shows.

Much has changed since the Goldendale Free Library opened in 1912—when volunteers operated out of a bank vault, carting wooden crates filled with books to schools and Grange halls.

In the mid-1980s, a combination of grant money and local contributions funded a massive expansion that took the 1914 Carnegie Library building from 5,000 square feet to the present 15,500 square feet.

Until the mid-2000s, it was the second largest building in the Fort Vancouver district, according to Naomi.

“We were always blessed with a lot of space for activities, and space to have a deeper, more varied collection that other communities might have been able to keep on the shelves,” she says.

Visits to the library now total about 72,000 a year, which Naomi says is probably the most visits to any building in the community except for grocery stores and schools.

Naomi’s successor as community librarian is Amy King Schoppert. She will preside over a planned 2017 renovation,

including the redesign of interior spaces and refreshed furniture, carpet and paint.

Amy previously was assistant librarian at The Dalles Library. She also has worked for the King County Library System and as a representative for Simon and Schuster.

Both women share a lifelong enthusiasm for libraries and the printed word. Amy learned to read by setting type in the print shop her father, poet Carlos Reyes, owned. When she was a teenager, she scored her dream job—working in the book department of Portland’s downtown Meier and Frank department store.

Naomi’s journey also began early.

“I never intended to become a librarian,” says Naomi, who grew up in Yakima and volunteered at her school libraries from fourth grade through high school.

At Whitman College, she was recruited to work in the library. After graduation, she worked another two years running the interlibrary loan office.

When Naomi graduated from Indiana University with dual master’s degrees in library science and linguistics, she says she was more than ready to come home. She still counts herself fortunate to end up back in Eastern Washington, working as a librarian in Goldendale and close to her family in Yakima.

In semi-retirement, Naomi looks forward to more time spent on favorite activities, from gardening to biking. Naomi also enjoys boating with her partner, Glen Cathers, on the 1934 Coast Guard motor lifeboat he spent seven years restoring. The couple has sailed the boat up the Columbia and Snake rivers and around Puget Sound. ■