



OMNIOLORE NEWS

Volume 7 Issue 2

March 1998

OMNIOLORE NEWS

A publication of OMNIOLORE, a Learning in Retirement Organization affiliated with The Division of Extended Education of California State University Dominguez Hills

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Omnilore News is published six times annually. We welcome short feature articles and news stories. Contact any of the staff members with your contributions.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Have you ever wondered how Omnilore fits into the national picture of Learning-in-Retirement (LIR) Institutions? Stay with me while I try to weave together national, local and Omnilore specifics.

First, a little bit about Omnilore to help you appreciate the comparison. We are nine years young, having begun in 1989. The initial 10 members held the first meetings in members' homes, then moved to three local library meeting room facilities (the P.V. Main, the Malaga Cove, and the San Pedro libraries). Before the end of the first year we held a name competition. The winner was Omnilore from "all" & "knowledge". The boardroom of the Malaga Savings & Loan became "our place" when the libraries couldn't assure our meeting times.

After three years, when we had our act down pat, we felt that we were ready to expand, and formed an association with Cal State Dominguez Hills. This association, a requirement of the Elderhostel Learning Network Institutes, gave us access to the Elderhostel mailing list, the source of many new members.

We now have approximately 135 members, and our modus operandi is peer member presentations. In addition to Omnilore there are two other Southern California LIRs that use that format -- the Plato Society at UCLA, and the SAGE Society at Cal State Northridge.

There are currently 225 LIR establishments in the Elderhostel LIR Network plus 66 groups that are in various stages of organization. There are also about 20 ALIROW (Association of LIR Organizations in the West) members, most of whom are not included in the Elderhostel umbrella. So by the end of this year there will be over 300 LIRs in the U.S! There are at least 18 LIRs in California, New York has 16, Florida 15, Massachusetts 11, Ohio 10, North Carolina eight, etc. The shocker to me is that Mississippi has six vs. Texas which reports in with only three.

Here are some national specifics:

- * Average membership is slightly over 200.
- * One LIR requires an initiation fee of \$1000 per member or \$1500 per couple. This is an academy of retired professionals.
- * The first U.S. LIR was formed in 1963 in N.Y.C., associated with City College of New York.
- * The second U.S. LIR was formed in 1972 at U.C. Berkeley. Plato, SAGE and Omnilore were formed in the 1980s.
- * By far, the vast majority of LIRs have been formed in the 1990s. It's a fast-growing, actually booming, phenomenon.
- * We are in the low percentile in terms of fees. There are a few that

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charge only \$10 per year plus \$20 per course. There are also a number that charge \$200 to \$400.

* There are over 50 organizations where courses are 100% member-led. There are also about 50 where courses are 100% professor-led.

* Most of those that are member-led utilize rotating member presentations; however, some utilize specific members as lecturer-professors.

* A very few LIRs have zero learning objectives; they are simply senior organizations emphasizing assistance to the community or to the campus with which they're associated.

* Harvard formed an LIR in 1977 that has 560 members, charges \$225 per semester, and is 100% member-led.

* I've seen data that claims three LIR's have 1900, 1400, and 1300 members.

* There are several European Learning in Retirement groups; perhaps the next time you're in London you might want to checkout "The Third Age".

Following are reports on several California groups:

(1) CLIR — CENTER FOR LEARNING IN RETIREMENT, U.C. Berkeley. The first LIR in California operates out of an extension-owned campus in San Francisco with 378 members. Their fees are \$195 and they admit new members only once a year, in August. New members must attend a one-day seminar. Their courses run the full gambit, from rotating member presentations to lectures. One of their most popular courses, History of Theatre and Drama, has been running for over five years.

* They have walks, gallery tours, etc. every month.

* They are not on the Web.

* They like many other LIRs have been frustrated in their attempts to recruit Hispanic, Asian and/or African-American members. (This is an objective of the Omnilore Board, to broaden and diversify our mem-

bership. We are soliciting all members to make contacts with potential minority members.)

(2) PLATO at UCLA, the oldest organization in southern California, dates to the early 1980's. Plato has about 385 members with yearly dues of \$400, most of which are paid to UCLA for their beautiful facilities adjacent to the campus in the UCLA Extension Building. They also have two full-time staffers. Plato does peer, rotating member presentations. The majority of their Study-Discussion Groups meet every week for 14 weeks (as compared to Omnilore's every other week). They also aim for about 50% presentation, 50% discussion.

Plato is a relatively no-nonsense organization. They drop members for nonattendance and they have an interview process for prospective members. (Though they rarely reject applicants.) However, it is not unusual for a prospective member to withdraw their application when they find out the amount of work the organization requires.

About a year ago Plato set up a Web site to describe their operation and to advise their members of ongoing activities and new topic descriptions. About 30% of members are online. They feel that the site is proving valuable even though it is not yet a source of new members.

Due to the expense of mailing around 40 topic choices to almost 400 members, they rely instead on members selecting their classes from a large booklet at their extension facility.

(3) SAGE at Cal State Northridge was founded by a Plato member who tired of driving from the San Fernando Valley to UCLA. They received a \$15,000 grant from the Michael Milken Foundation (he ain't all bad) to help them get off the ground. SAGE just celebrated their 10th anniversary. They meet at a local church and spend 25% of their income for their facilities. SAGE follows the Plato format.

(4) CLE — CONTINUING LEARNING EXPERIENCE at Cal State Fullerton is an interesting story in a number of respects. They were founded in 1979 with 57 people.

One of the founders was a highly-skilled fundraiser and during the early '80's raised over a million dollars to build a facility on land donated by the Cal State campus. Their classes are all over the map. They have some Omnilore-type peer-led Study-Discussion groups, but most are lecture-type courses. They have two impressive (and expensive) computer labs and an even more impressive Gerontology Health Center. They draw on an upper middle class community; no less than five close-by colleges supply professors to teach their courses. They're the largest LIR in California, weighing in at over 800 members.

(5) ALL at the University of California, Irvine is a brand new operation, with first classes having begun just last month. They capitalized upon the enormous human resource level in their immediate area to commence with a membership of 170.

It's clear that LIRs begin life in different ways, go through different growth stages, and operate in a variety of ways. There are certainly many ways to skin that LIR cat. Please call if you have any questions or desire any additional information.

Burt Cutler

Omnilore News

Comments and input can be sent to



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Omnilore Profiles

Mary O'Neill — Hot Topics Coordinator

"Flinging her pink feathery boa around any available neck, wiggling in a Mae West way and tap-dancing until sweat soaks her blonde hair, Mary O'Neill's variety show aims to elicit response." --That's how the Daily Breeze described Mary in a December 1996 article about her monthly performances at convalescent homes.

The costume-loving entertainer of the elderly is the same Mary O'Neill who has been soaking up three courses a semester at Omnilore for the past four years.

Omnilorians saw a hint of the dress-up side of Mary's personality just twice--once when she appeared before the Omnilore study-discussion group on Evolution dressed as "the missing link" and last Spring when she showed up at a colloquium on Shakespeare clad in a medieval costume.

Notwithstanding her flair for the theatrical, for most of her working life Mary was a professional librarian.

A native of Granite City, Illinois, Mary received a teaching certificate in English History, and worked for two years as a high school teacher prior to her first marriage. She received her masters degree in library science from the University of Illinois in 1966.

Prior to coming to California in 1972 she worked in the government documents library at the University of Illinois, was special operations assistant military librarian at Fort Bragg,

North Carolina, and served as behavioral science library assistant in Salt Lake City, Utah.

From 1972 until her retirement in 1991, Mary was affiliated with the Palos Verdes library system as adult reference and catalog librarian. While serving in that capacity she conducted 12 puppet workshops in Palos Verdes schools.

In 1978 she was hired as a movie contract puppet player for the first Muppet movie where she controlled two alligators.

When Mary retired at the early age of 51, she found herself with a very full plate. Not only do she and husband Jim O'Neill (Omnilore's curriculum chairman) tutor youngsters in the 3 R's, but Mary has taught typing and keyboarding and has served as a library educational consultant for a Lawndale school in the capacity of educational research librarian.

In addition to performing in variety shows at senior retirement homes (where she goes by the nom de plume "May East"), Mary does stints as a research librarian for small projects, gives speeches at Toastmasters in San Pedro, and keeps occupied with the hobbies of sewing, singing, dancing, reading and writing. In addition she has taken on the task of arranging the Omnilore Hot Topic sessions every month.

Her motto is "Whatever you do in this life, do it with enthusiasm, give it style, give it class. Enjoy yourself. It's later than you think!"

SUMMER TOPICS OFFERED

There were sixteen topics offered to the membership for the Summer of '98 semester.

- * Archaeology
- * Post Impressionist Movements in Art
- * The Civil War
- * The Lives and Works of Will and Ariel Durant
- * Free Trade - Pros and Cons
- * Hinduism
- * History of American Political Parties
- * A World of Ideas
- * Jewish History
- * Machiavelli
- * When the Pentagon Was for Sale
- * Philosophy for Dummies
- * Potpourri
- * The Impressive Rise of Spain
- * Joyce's Ulysses
- * Creative Writing

Your registration forms should be in by now and you will be notified shortly of your class assignment. Thanks to everyone who submitted an idea for the summer session.



CLASS SIZE POLICY

At the last Board meeting there was a discussion and

clarification of the Omnilore policy on class size.

- 1 There is no limit on the number of members who can select a course.
- 2 Courses must have at least eight members to be scheduled.
- 3 No class will be assigned more than 16 members. If more than 16 members sign up the class will be divided by the curriculum committee into two or more classes.

REMINDER

If you are the last group to leave either of the class-

- rooms, please remember to:
- ⇒ Put away coffee pot and fixings
 - ⇒ Shut off all lights
 - ⇒ Close all windows
 - ⇒ Lock Doors
 - ⇒ Turn off heat
- Don't assume another group is coming in!



IN MEMORIAM

Omnilore wishes to offer condolences to the family and friends of Omnilorian Betty Cooper who passed away in January.

DAY TRIP TO TOUR BRAILLE INSTITUTE AND GUIDE DOGS OF AMERICA

**Don't Miss Out
Space Still Available**

A few openings remain for the April 15 day trip to the Braille Institute and Guide Dogs of America. Cost for the tour, transportation and lunch is \$31.

If you have not yet made your reservation and would like to go, please fill out the reservation form on page 5 and mail it with your check by March 15 to Patricia Morris, 5700 Ravenspur Drive, #202, Rancho Palos Verdes CA 90275. Checks should be made payable to Friends of Omnilore.

HOT TOPICS

by Mary O'Neill

Be a part of the Hot Topics lively discussion group on Thursday **March 19th** from 12-2 p.m. when we will discuss the topic "Should a village raise Iowa's septuplets while removing other needy, single family births from the state's assistance? Who's responsible for the children's support? Why do we value some children and not others? Should a city give a house to the septuplets while cutting off benefits to seventy other children? Please bring your lunch and share your ideas with us.

The Hot Topic meeting on **April 16th** from 12 - 2 P.M. will be a brainstorm session suggesting new courses and core texts for future Omnilore study/discussion groups. Omnilore needs your ideas for interesting topics to submit to the curriculum committee. We will help you to describe your ideas. Please bring your lunch and join us.

Persons with ideas for future topics are invited to call Mary O'Neill at (310) 539-0415.

OMNIOLORE NEEDS YOU!

FLOOR STANDING EASEL AVAILABLE

Wondering how you can help Omnilore? We are in need of an Assistant Treasurer to assist with Fall enrollments.

The duties of the Assistant Treasurer are to make two copies of every enrollment with its attached membership check and give the originals and a copy to the Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer will keep a copy until enrollments are closed.

If you would like to volunteer, please call either President Burt Cutler at (310) 541-8973 or Treasurer Gloria Jacobs at (310) 378-3206.



A new floor standing easel and pad are available for classroom use. They can be found in the A/V cabinet in Room 7. If you wish to use the easel for a presentation, please contact your coordinator. Be sure to

replace the pad with the easel each time it is used.

Also in that cabinet are a VCR & an overhead transparency projector. In the tall cabinet in Room 8 we also have an opaque projector capable of displaying any paper, book, or magazine page directly on a large screen without any preparation. Again, contact your coordinator if you wish to use any of these aids in your presentations.

AROUND KNOB HILL SCHOOL

SPECIAL REQUEST

The university has requested that OMNIOLORE members NOT ask the personnel at the Knob Hill facility for use of any room other than classrooms 7 and 8 for any meetings -- even as short as 10 minutes.

LOCKED OUT?

If you find yourself unable to gain access to classroom 7 or 8, ask Debbie in the main office in the NW front corner of the school.

Key Now Available!



Hank Steddom has obtained a new key to the tall cabinet in Room 8 that houses the opaque projector. The key can be found on a hook at the top of the phone cabinet in Room 7.

The original key was "borrowed" and not returned and replacing it involved considerable time and expense. Please, please, please, if you need to use this key put it back where you found it. Also if anyone knows where the original is please return it to the phone cabinet.

Hiking Club

Annual Downtown Walk

On Friday, April 17, 1998, Omnilore's hiking group will again tour a part of downtown Los Angeles, viewing history and architecture. If you would like to join us please contact John Taber at (310) 831-4768 or Sunny Golombek at (310) 371-4358.



SINNING

A little secret sinning
now and then
Should not disturb the saintliness
of men.
For when your life is spent and the
sun has set
'Tis easier to repent than to
regret.

Anonymous



Reservations for April 15 Day Trip to Braille Institute & Guide Dogs of America

Name of Individual Member _____

Names of Couple _____

Amount enclosed \$31 _____ \$62 (Couple) _____

Make Checks Payable to Friends of Omnilore

Send to:

Patricia Morris
5700 Ravenspur Drive #202
Rancho Palos Verdes, Ca. 90275

OMNIOLORE CALENDAR 1998

- March
 - 9 Deadline for return of Summer Registration forms
 - 12 Board of Directors' Meeting
 - 15 Reservation Deadline for Braille Institute Tour
 - 16 Colloquium Committee Meeting
- April
 - 9 Board of Directors' Meeting
 - 10-12 Good Friday - Easter
 - 11 Passover
 - 15 Deadline for May Newsletter
 - 15 Day Trip to Braille Institute & Guide Dogs of America
 - 17 Coordinators Training (for Summer S/D groups)
 - 20 Colloquium Committee Meeting
 - 24 Spring S/D Groups End - Evaluation Forms Due
- May
 - 11 Summer S/D Groups Begin
 - 11 Fall S/D Topic Suggestion Forms Distributed
 - 14 Board Meeting (Approval of '98-'99 Calendar)
 - 18 Colloquium Committee Meeting
 - 25 Memorial Day Celebrated



IMPORTANT

Please Note: All changes and additions to the Omnilore Calendar must be cleared with the Vice President, Administration Hank Steddum (310) 375-3981 in order to avoid conflicts in scheduling or use of rooms.