



OFF THE SHELF
North Olympic Library System
2210 South Peabody Street
Port Angeles, WA 98362

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COLUMNIST: Liz Duval, Customer Service Specialist
RE: Meeting Freedom to Assemble Needs in the Sequim Library Meeting Room
ATTACHED: *Liz Duval.jpg*
Family Crowd.JPG
Living Room.JPG

Library meeting rooms reflect the quintessentially democratic values of the American public library. The meeting room at the Sequim Branch is an important, and busy, community hub! For non-profit events that are non-commercial in nature, and open to all, there is generally no charge to use the library meeting room. For other uses the rental fee is moderate. Reservations can easily be made online, up to three months in advance, at nols.org/room.

Groups of many descriptions use the Sequim Library meeting room for a variety of community activities. Kayak and railroad enthusiasts, religious and civic discussion groups, writing and book clubs, gardeners, crafters, and stamp collectors - regardless of their particular focus, these groups all use and value access to the meeting room.

One user group, the *Spontaneous Writing Group*, gives writing prompts which members can use to start any kind of project: poetry, essay, memoir, humor etc. "This gets the creative juices flowing," says Leader Heidi Hansen, "and allows writers to form the skeleton of an idea, which they can then finish at home."

Brittany Wilmot, leads *Kaleidoscope Play and Learn*, a free weekly program for preschoolers and their parents, because "There is such a need for this community to gather, for parents to be able to connect with each other instead of feeling isolated."

Last year 9,617 people attended 298 library programs at the Sequim Branch, and an additional 5,506 community members utilized the Sequim Branch library meeting room 512 times for community events. That's a lot of people using the 500 square foot meeting room! It is often booked nearly solid, especially during afternoons and evenings, and it can be a challenge for users and staff to find an available place on the schedule. Maximum room capacity is also a challenge, requiring large library programs to regularly move outside or to other venues.

Because there are currently no study or conference rooms in the Sequim Branch, small groups must vie for space on the main meeting room calendar, or simply use the limited seating in the library itself. After school gets out, all the tables in the library are often occupied, and the noise levels increase as a consequence.

Not surprisingly, community input to the conceptual design for a larger Sequim library identified more and better meeting space as one of the most frequently wished for "Future Library" features. In response to that wish, proposed building plans for the Future Library designate approximately 2,825 square feet as group activity space - including two large meeting rooms that can be expanded into a single very large room, a Maker/STEM/Storytime space for youth activities, four smaller study rooms for quiet study, reading, or tutoring, *and* an acoustically separate quiet-reading and periodicals room. There are also more reading tables and seating everywhere throughout the library, and in the mixed-use social gathering space in the lobby. For additional information about the Sequim Future Library project visit www.nols.org/sequimfuturelibrary/.

For more information, about community and library programs or events going on in the Sequim Branch meeting room, visit www.nols.org, call 360.683.1161, or send an email to Discover@nols.org. The Sequim Branch Library is located at 630 North Sequim Avenue.



Columnist Liz Duval



Big crowd at a family event in the Sequim Library meeting room



A Library program held in the library “living room” to accommodate more attendees.