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To Whom It May Concern

I strongly support the nomination of Laura Sherbo for ASCLA's best librarian for the year.

Laura Sherbo and I have worked together professionally from 1977 until 2002 when I accepted another position at a local health care organization. I supervised Laura at Logan Correctional Center Library for 2 years. After the Washington State Library offered me the branch manager position at the Western Hospital Branch Library Corn Belt Library System immediately appointed her the supervisor of the library. Two years later the Washington State Library offered Laura the branch manager at the nearby McNeil Island Correctional Center Branch Library. She held this position until she promoted to the Institutional Library Services (ILS) Coordinator in 2002. During my years at the State Library I admired her as she worked hard to provide the best possible information services to patients and inmates in institutions and hospitals in Washington State.

As long as I have known Laura, she has dedicated her professional career as a leader of professional and paraprofessional staff at the State Library demanding that inmates of correctional centers, patients at the two state hospital, and residents at the residential institutions for the developmentally delayed receive highest quality library services. Furthermore, in working and negotiating with the Department of Corrections administrators she insisted that inmates' rights are respected, library records are kept confidential, and interlibrary loan privileges recognized unless security was endangered. Over the years, until McNeil Island closed early this year, she built up the collections to meet the educational and recreational needs of the inmates. Under her leadership, and despite initial objections from the Department of Corrections, in the late 1990's the State Library converted the libraries from card catalog system to free standing computerized catalog that inmates are able to access and converted circulation to a computerized systems. Over the years she also demanded that inmate library clerks must meet certain standards (high school or GED) take an exam, and receive high levels of pay.

During the quarterly meetings again she provided her leadership in having the ILS staff write and edit official State Library policies and standards for the branches. Sometime during the 1990's the State Library management appointed Laura to a committee that initiated and oversaw the reorganization of the library system as the coordinator for the corrections libraries.

In 2002 the State Library appointed Laura as the Institutional Library Services coordinator and very briefly was my supervisor. From what I hear from current staff, Laura is well liked, continues to be a strong leader, and fights for funds when the State Library has lost about 50% of the 2001 level of FTE's and state funding. She manages to inspire staff in these difficult times when salaries and benefits are being cut, coworkers laid off is a challenge and public employees are highly unpopular.

Neal Van Der Voorn

Library Branch Manager, Logan Correctional Center, Illinois, 1977-1980

Library Branch Manager, Eastern State Hospital and Western State Hospital,
Washington, 1980-2002

Medical/Hospital Librarian, MultiCare Health Care System, Tacoma, WA, 2002-2010