



Friends of the Olympia Library

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NEWS RELEASE

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for further information

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"Why Libraries?" will be the topic for discussion Tuesday, February 26, at 8 pm in the Olympia Public Library, as a series of eight free public forums designed to increase community dialogue about local library services gets under way.

The discussion series is part of the project "Education: The Public Library and the People's Needs", organized by the Friends of the Olympia Library and a group of students at The Evergreen State College. Funded in part by the Washington Commission for the Humanities, the public forums are just one part of the overall project, according to Bill McKamey, a coordinator of the community effort.

"We are also interviewing 2400 residents of the Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater area, 1600 by mail and 800 in person, in order to determine what educational needs they have which are not currently being met," McKamey explained. "By the time the project ends in April, we should have a good idea of how changes can be made which will enable the libraries to better serve local citizens."

The February 26 forum, a discussion of the historical role played by the library in our society, and its philosophical importance to us today, will be lead by Giovanni Costigan, Professor of History at the University of Washington. Costigan, an internationally known author and lecturer, will be joined in the discussion by Matthew W. Hill, retired Justice of the Washington State Supreme

Court, and Ron G. Rowe, local architect and civic leader.

In his prepared remarks for the forum, Dr. Costigan observed that the library is an essential component of life for people living in a democracy, and is the symbol of democracy's resolve to insure the education of its citizens. "Without this education, democracy is in danger of lapsing into the control of demagogues. For this reason dictators everywhere -- whether in Nazi Germany, Communist Russia and China, Fascist Spain or in plain military dictatorships like those now in power in Greece, Brazil, and Chile -- seek to impede the free flow of ideas, to impose censorship and, if necessary, to burn books in public," Costigan added.

"Costigan's remarks will be followed by a discussion with Justice Hill, Rowe, and four other local citizens chosen from among those interviewed," McKamey explained. "I strongly urge the public to attend and become involved."