Volunteers! That is a word that warms the heart of many, including libraries. Volunteers can be helpful in so many areas. Volunteers play a vital role in our library. They do everything from shelve materials to organize book sales, and many other things. Overall they make our library a stronger, healthier place.

Much of the same can be said about our organization for libraries and librarians, MLA. MLA depends heavily on volunteers to keep it strong and healthy too. (This is where my sales pitch starts so hang in there.) MLA has opportunities to volunteer as much or as little as you can. There are board positions, committee opportunities, or even just an hour or two manning a table at conference. Big or small, every role is vital. With that said, I would like to extend a gigantic thank you to all the people who have stepped forward to help make my year as president a great one.

But speaking of MLA… Do you know all the great things it can do for you? The Professional Development Committee awards grants every year for travel to the conference and other training events. The government affairs committee doggedly pursues all bills that have anything to do with libraries and privacy. They keep us, the membership, informed of Capitol Hill happenings so we can get involved. MLA also has representatives to MPLA, PNLA, and ALA, so that Montana can stay connected regionally and nationally. The PR Committee is always hard at work creating new ways to reach people and to help MLA grow.

But if you are just looking for a great way to help out MLA and to be helped by them consider purchasing one of the new hot off the presses cookbook or perhaps start sporting an MLA license plate. I have mine and it is quite stylish. I will soon start making librarian inspired meals and all will be well.

Samantha Pierson, MLA President
Montana Library Focus
ISSN 1076-352X
is the official publication of the Montana Library
Association and is published as a service to its members.

It is published six times a year: February, April, June, August, October and December. It has a print readership of 210 and an online readership of over 500.

If you are interested in placing an ad, or sponsoring the MLA Focus Newsletter, please send inquiries, articles, ads, and reviews to the editor:

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By Pam Henley, Technology Assistant/MPLA Rep
Bozeman Public Library

The MPLA website has undergone a few changes lately, including the addition of Facebook and Twitter feeds right on the front page. The MemberClicks log-in has been moved to the top (much quicker to sign in!) and upcoming events are linked on the left. Remember to "like" MPLA on Facebook, and watch for the Twitter feed hashtag # to follow conference news. Use these social networks to keep up with MPLA!!

M.L.A. WANTS YOU!

MLA wants you and you need MLA. Please consider running for one of these available offices:

* Vice President/President-Elect  
* M.L.A. Representative and Director at Large-East

Serving in one of these positions is a valuable experience both personally and professionally and I encourage everyone to consider running for an office.

If you or someone you know would like to volunteer please contact Eva English, MLA Past-President, at (406) 353-2607, ext. 262 or email her at evaenglish@yahoo.com. Thank you!
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State History Magazine Turns 60!

By Tammy Ryan, Business Manager
Montana The Magazine of Western History

Here is a Montana success story. Montana The Magazine of Western History, published by the Montana Historical Society, is celebrating 60 years in print. The magazine’s nativity dates to April 1950 when the MHS Board of Trustees decided that a “living magazine” ought to be published. With its first issue in 1951, the magazine carried the motto “to preserve, to publish, and to promote interest in the history of Montana.” Montana has carried on what those folks set out to do. Today the magazine circulates to nearly 10,000 MHS members and newsstands customers. Because it publishes more than Montana history, it’s also a membership benefit for those who belong to the Western History Association, currently based in St. Louis.

Each Montana issue contains 4 to 6 full-length articles, book reviews, and a small dose of advertising. The often rare photographs, art, and maps used for illustration come from both public and private collections. Articles are peer reviewed to ensure accuracy, and the magazine is used around the world by educators, authors, filmmakers, genealogists, and researchers in almost every field imaginable.

The magazine staff is always looking for ways to make Montana more accessible. The MHS web site offers a free searchable index online, and the magazine is available at hundreds of libraries and throughout the world on JSTOR.

With a growing list of awards from such organizations as the Mountain-Plains Museums Association, National Cowboy Museum and Western Heritage Center, Western Writers of America, Westerners International, Wild West History Association, Forest History Society, Army History Foundation, Wyoming Historical Society, and Envirotech the magazine’s success would surely make the founding board members proud!

Happy birthday, Montana! If anyone wants to purchase back issues, advertise, or become a MHS member visit them online at www.montanahistoricalsociety.org, friend them on Facebook, or contact Tammy Ryan at tryan@mt.gov or 406-444-4708.
2010 Collection Management Honor Roll

The 2010 Honor Roll includes 83 MT libraries: 11 academic, 58 public, 11 school, and 3 special libraries. Congratulations to all of the libraries being recognized by the Montana State Library Commission for sharing resources. The Honor Roll was announced at the Awards Luncheon at the MLA Conference in Billings and the honorees were listed in the conference booklet. The list is posted on the State Library website at: http://tinyurl.com/683duo8

Fall Workshop 2011

This year’s Fall Workshop will be in Bozeman on September 23-24. As always, there will be lots of sessions to choose from, a chance to visit with fellow librarians and trustees, free lunch, and no registration fee. Please plan to attend!

Montana Certification Program for Library Directors, Staff & Trustees

If you’re interested in the certification program, the details and forms are on the MSL website: http://tinyurl.com/6bxprt6. With the master CE list and the online tracking form, we think it is easier than ever to participate.

In the spring I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours.

~Mark Twain
Great Falls Festival of the Book

By Jude Smith, Public Relations
Great Falls Public Library

The Great Falls Festival of the Book wraps up this week-end after enjoying great readings, contests and audience response. This year’s festival was planned differently from the previous ten years in order to encourage a better audience attendance. Rather than run events over a weekend, they were extended over a three-week period, two or three events per week. The results are encouraging as a scheduling strategy for this community. More and varied people attended each event than in past years.

And what events! Jamie Ford, author of *Hotel On the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*, (winner of the 2009 Montana Book Award) kicked the festival off with humor and wit to a nearly full house. If he tires of writing, he could easily turn to stand-up comedy. The audience was laughing all night.

The third annual Grand Word Meister Contest followed the next week. Thanks to the work of former Great Falls Public Library Director Jim Heckel, who compiled the words, no small feat, and co-hosted the evening with former Great Falls Mayor Randy Gray. Nine three-member teams from various organizations around town competed to pick the correct definition of selected words. Just like Jeopardy, it’s easier to do from a seat in the audience. The competition was combined with a food drive for the local food bank. Teams and their supporters earned extra privileges with the food donations. Adding this element extended the evening to become a truly community event. Audience size was over double from last year and new teams wanting to compete next year have already come forward. It was an evening of words, great fun, and community.

Augusta author Hal Herring continued the festival’s progress a few days later. Not as well known as some of his counterparts in the festival, Hal held his own by weaving historical tales and charisma. He is an engaging storyteller and an accomplished author in his own right.

Perhaps the highpoint of the festival was the performance of Paul Zarzyski and Wylie Gustafson. Both consummate artists and entertainers, they played their hearts out to a more than full house. They shared a 2010 Western Spur Award for Best Western Song. Paul also won a 2010 Spur Award for Best Poem. Paul truly is a great contemporary Western poet and Wylie is the “coolest cowpoke around”.

Three local authors, all award winners, rounded out the readings the following evening. Local Historian Ken Robison, winner of the Montana Historical Society’s 2010 Heritage Keeper Award, Ruth McLaughlin, 2010 winner of the Montana Book Award for her moving memoir *Bound Like Grass*, and Carol Bradley, an award-winning journalist and author of *Saving Grace*, each read from respect works.

The festival concluded with writing workshops, boasting long waiting lists, led by Ruth and Carol.

Having had a significantly stronger community response to this year’s festival is encouraging and emphasizes the importance of creative scheduling or rather adapting events to your community. Having a strong line-up certainly made the festival a success as well.
Get On The Bus!

By Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson, Public Relations Librarian, JD, MLIS
Missoula Public Library

The Missoula Public Library is moving forward (literally) with its portion of the grant received by the Montana State Library from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds or The Montana Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) project. Missoula is following the grant’s mission of improving Internet access for Montana communities by expanding technology-related capabilities at public libraries across the state by purchasing a technology bus which will travel around Missoula County to area residents who might not have ready Internet access. In February library employee Jim Semmelroth traveled to Sacramento to pick up “The Book Buggy,” a 32-foot bus the Missoula Public Library will rename and retrofit to use as its mobile branch making a two-week circulation of the county. There will be eight public access terminals on the bus, a teaching station, a librarian, and a librarian assistant to teach users of the bus about the library’s databases and various online resources including how to fill out an electronic job application and file government forms. Librarians will also teach patrons to place holds so they can receive materials in-hand once the bus cycles around again. The primary objective of the bus will be to share and teach technology-related items to the public. Right now the Missoula Public Library is holding an in-house contest to name the bus (and there are some doozies for suggestions!), then a contest for designing the art that will go on the bus will be opened to the public. Then on July 1, 2011, the technology bus begins traveling Missoula County’s backroads and byways. We’re very excited about our mobile branch and look forward to sharing more of our progress as we get closer to launch day, July 1.