Greeting Montana Librarians!

Our lovely late summer seems to finally be winding down, and a short fall season and long winter await us. Time to reflect on the past year's successes and plan for the upcoming year's challenges. About 45 of your colleagues spent two days at Chico Hot Springs for the ASLD/PLD retreat last week. Many thanks to Kathy Mora, Jim Kammerer, and Beth Boyson for yet another thought-provoking two days. And to all the speakers and presenters, thank you for your time and efforts! Chico is the perfect place for a RETREAT. I know I returned refreshed and energized.

The MLA 2012 Conference Planning Committee met in Three Forks on Tuesday, October 18th. We selected an incredible slate of workshops for our annual conference in Big Sky. (If you haven't already, please mark your calendar for April 11-14th, 2012!) Desiree Dramstad has been working closely with our conference planners and we're really quite well organized for this time of year. Kathy House has some wonderful receptions and activities planned and we've picked out some yummy meals. It is shaping up to be a fun and fruitful conference; and you can't beat the setting—beautiful Big Sky! Stay tuned for the announcement regarding our keynote speaker and special programs. We hope to have them nailed down soon.

MLA just renewed a two-year contract with Smith and McGowan, our lobbyists in Helena. They will be working year-round—both in the legislative years and off-years to carry the “Libraries are Critical to Our Communities” message. They will keep us informed of any pending legislation that could affect the viability of libraries and library resources. We will look to the membership to give us success stories for our lobbyists to use with the legislators. We're pleased with this new contract.

I encourage you all to send stories and photos of the innovative things you are doing in your library to Megan Stark for the next FOCUS issue. It's important that we keep each other informed on the happenings around the state.

Until next time....

Kim Crowley, President
Montana Library Association
Meet the New Director of Bozeman Public Library
By Cindy Christin, Children's Services
Bozeman Public Library

MEET OUR NEW LIBRARY DIRECTOR! After an extensive national search, the Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that Susan F. Gregory will be the new Library Director for the Bozeman Public Library. “The Trustees are very pleased to have Susan Gregory joining us,” said Ron Farmer, chair of the Board of Trustees. “We are lucky to have such an accomplished librarian taking over the helm of our Library.”

Gregory comes from Norman, Oklahoma, where she currently works as a development specialist in the Pioneer Library System Development Office, after serving for 11 years as the branch manager of the Norman Public Library. Gregory has over 20 years of library experience and has been involved with the American Library Association, including membership on the Budget and Planning Committee and Presidential Advisory Committee. She earned her Masters of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Oklahoma.

“When I saw the picture of the Bozeman Public Library, I knew immediately that Bozeman was a very special place,” said Gregory. “The building told me that Bozeman is a town full of people who value lifelong learning, value the arts, and understand the relationship between libraries and the arts. I knew immediately that this was a community that I wanted to be a part of.”

Gregory will arrive in Bozeman in November, just in time to celebrate the Library’s fifth year anniversary in the new LEED certified building. Gregory fills the director position that was made available with the retirement of Alice Meister, who had been at the Library for 13 years.

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Our MLIS students in Montana are eager to gain hands-on field experience.
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PlaySpace Opens at Bozeman Public Library
By Cindy Christin, Children's Services
Bozeman Public Library

PlaySpace--a unique play and learning area--opened in the Children's Room at the Bozeman Public Library in September. PlaySpace is primarily a creative construction zone with a huge array of beautiful new wooden blocks designed for children and adults to enjoy together. Research shows that parents can promote their children's learning through play in many ways, and building together offers premium learning and fun opportunities for families with young children.

Often called the work of childhood, play is the primary platform for children's learning. Play helps children develop language and thinking skills, physical skills, and social and emotional abilities. Executive function skills—self-regulation, ability to focus, retain new information, plan and work towards a goal—are developed and practiced during play.

Why blocks? "Wooden blocks, especially those that offer a wide variety of shapes and proportional sizes, offer many quality learning opportunities to young children," says Cindy Christin, Children's Librarian. "For example, as children build structures with these blocks, they transform into young architects and engineers, learning naturally about math skills such as proportion, fractions, balance, geometry, and patterning. Children practice science inquiry skills as they make observations, test their predictions, and draw conclusions based on evidence. New vocabulary emerges with every building session. And children develop social skills as they plan and execute building projects together. Best of all, building with blocks is fun for everyone!"

This project is generously funded by The Friends of the Library. "We are happy to support quality programs for children," says John Gallagher, president of the Friends. "We invite all families with children 0-8 to visit PlaySpace in the Children's Room of the Bozeman Public Library."

For more information, please call the Children's Desk at 582-2404.

Ready-2-Read READ Rendezvous

The Bozeman Public Library hosted a first-ever gathering of children's services librarians in Montana in October, thanks to generous funding from First Interstate BancSystem Foundation. The Ready 2 Read Rendezvous offered two days of workshops and discussions covering child development, Every Child Ready To Read literacy program, the importance of play, and advocacy training for almost 50 librarians. Libraries who are offering services and programs for ages 0-5 were eligible to apply. For more information, contact Sara Groves at the Montana State Library at sgroves@mt.gov.
MLA Awards!
By Anita Scheetz
Fort Peck Tribal Library

Do you know someone who has done an outstanding job for their community in and/or through the Library? Now is the time to get started on the process to honor those outstanding individuals or libraries. The committee would like to have several nominations for each award so please take time to think about the awards categories and nominate someone or write a letter of support for a nomination.

It is never too early! Note the outstanding achievements of your colleagues and give them the recognition they deserve. Find information about all of these awards in the MLA handbook section of the MLA website. Full descriptions will also be included in the December Focus.

MLA Awards and Honors:

- Honorary MLA Life-Time Membership
- Library of the Year
- Sheila Cates Award for Librarian of the Year
- Trustee of the Year
- School Administrator of the Year Award
- Special Friend to Libraries Award
- Pat Williams Intellectual Freedom Award
- Interest Group Excellence Award
- Media Award
- Paraprofessional of the Year
- School Library Program of the Year Award

Three letters are required for every nomination: 1 (one) letter from the nominator and 2 (two) letters in support of the nomination. Hard copies and/or email attachments are fine. No more than three letters will be considered. For the Media Award, a copy of the nominated project must also be submitted.

All nomination materials should be sent to:

Anita Scheetz
Fort Peck Tribal Library
Box 398
Poplar, MT 59255
ascheetz@fpcc.edu (preferred)
406-768-6303 (fax)

The deadline for nominations is Monday, January 23, 2012.
News from the Montana State Library
By Sue Jackson
Montana State Library

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://msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/Training/certification/default.asp. With the master list and the online tracking form, it’s easy to participate.

2011 Collection Management Honor Roll

Each year the Montana State Library Commission recognizes libraries committed to sharing resources through the Collection Management Honor Roll. To be eligible for this year’s Honor Roll, a library needs to have a copy of the current (updated in the last 3 years) and approved (by the library’s board or administration) collection management policy on file at Montana State Library by December 31, 2011. The library must also have at least 50% of holdings on the WorldCat database and be actively adding/deleting records to that database. Details about the CMHR are at: http://msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/For_All_Librarians/Collection_Management/default.asp

Trustee Workshops Coming in May

Montana State Library will be scheduling workshops for library trustees at five MT locations during May 2012. Because of the library board’s crucial role in budgeting and financial issues that face the library, the May workshops will be focused on Library Finances – Funding Sources, Accounting Reports, and What It All Means. Dates and locations will be announced early next year.

Montana State Library Fall Workshop
By Joann Flick, Training and Development Specialist
Montana State Library

A few days after I started my new job at the Montana State Library in March, I was told that the Fall Workshop would be my responsibility. At the time, it sounded like a fun activity, with steady attendance and a good reputation for valuable training. As an instructional designer and someone who just loves to plan a party, I was eager to accept guidance from my mentor, Sue Jackson and carry on the fine tradition of this event. A few months later, Sue noted that she would not be at the event as she had committed to attend the National Festival of the Book on behalf of Montana libraries. Suddenly, I felt a little lonely…and a little concerned. I had never attended a Fall Workshop, so I didn’t have the benefit of the kind of affective learning that only comes from the experience of being there.

My planning involved not only Sue, but also Jennie Stapp and Sarah McHugh along with the consultants and some newer members of the MSL staff. I had input from members of the Network Advisory Council and the data from my training need analysis.
I had a well-defined goal – to provide quality professional development in all 4 areas of CE credit within the MSL accreditation program for public libraries, expecting that some academic and school libraries may also attend. The emphasis was on the evolving role of libraries.

My needs analysis identified plenty of areas of need. Finding presenters to fill those needs came next. I was heartened by how eager Montana librarians were to share their expertise. We secured several presenters from out-of-state as well. In the end, the program fairly reflected the priorities set forth by the data presented in my needs analysis.

The Fall Workshop was held on September 23 and 24 at the Best Western Gran Tree in Bozeman. Attendance soared this year – rising to more than 160 from 120 last year, more than a 30% increase. Several sessions closed out, and the hotel accommodated the extra load by shifting rooms around and moving our lunch spot.

The best-attended session was the introduction to the EBSCO databases and HomeworkMT – the new online tutoring services provided by the State Library. The sessions on cataloging were the first to fill up. Book mending and conservation, as predicted, also filled early. I was delighted by the response to the two sessions we planned on data: how to mine it and what to do with it. Several of my advisors had been wary that librarians would want to spend one 3-hr session on data, much less two. But, my data had shown a real need, and so I pushed for them. It was gratifying to fill both of them to capacity. The two sessions on Play in the library turned out to be a great prelude to the 3-day training a couple weeks later that Sara Groves pulled together with funding from First Interstate Bank.

There were T-shirts from EBSCO for everyone – enough to take extras home to fellow library staff. Summer Library Program manuals were distributed (does anyone have the manual for Plains, MT?? It has gone missing…and we don’t have extras). $50 worth of candy was consumed (the Snickers Bars were the first to go). Bins of board books went home to libraries near and far. RDA records were composed, torn books mended, plans for digital libraries to serve new evolving community needs created. Missoula’s new Web on Wheels WOW Bus was on hand for tours and scores of librarians contributed to the BTOP training needs analysis, which will augment some of my preliminary research.

What is great about the Fall Workshop is that the longer session times (3 hrs) allow for more hands-on, collaborative and deliberative learning activities. We designed several sessions with breakouts that would address different needs or levels of learners (some worked well, others need adjustments to function better next year).

I’m still collecting feedback and will soon begin the process of planning the event for next year. Feedback and input always welcome. In the instructional design process, evaluation from one event is the beginning of the needs analysis for the next activity. Thanks to the long list of people who contributed to the event with their valuable time and expertise. I’m looking forward to doing it again. Next year, I need to figure out a way to avoid printing handouts…I’m thinking that we should just give everyone an iPad – that would do it!
Grant Applications Pay Off for MLA Members
By Mary Drew Powers
Parmly Billings Library

Two MLA members recently used Professional Development Grants to attend conferences out-of-state. Awards of $800 each were given to Dana McMurray of Missoula Public Library and James Kammerer from the Montana State Library after they applied for Professional Development Grants from MLA.

Dana works with Young Adults and used his funds to go to PNLA in August. He said, “Attending sessions on Historical Fiction and on Adolescent Behavior has already improved my readers’ advisory skills and behavior management skills with our young adult patrons. And attending sessions on Outreach and on Early Literacy prompted new outreach efforts to families with young children and contributed to our departmental brainstorming about ways to enhance our early literacy efforts. Plus it’s personally and professionally revitalizing to meet and talk with librarians from around the region.”

Our picture of Dana shows him in a book review video from Missoula Public Library’s YouTube Channel.

James is the Information Services Manager at Montana State Library and he used his funds to attend the Archive-It pre-conference and the Best Practices Exchange Conference in Louisville, KY which just took place the 3rd week in October. His job includes overseeing the development of MSL’s Web Archive. James had several goals for attending, including improving the User Interface of the MSL Web Archive and to get up-to-date with digital preservation policies. For personal professional development, he also wanted to gain a sense of where the profession is going in the future.

To see what the State Library (and James) is doing to preserve Montana’s history, go to http://msl.mt.gov/for_state_employees/archive_montana/faq.asp

If you want to see yourself at a Regional or National Conference, go to the Montana Library Association Homepage and click on “Handbook,” then “Grants, Guidelines for.” The next grant deadline is April 1, 2012.
Celebrate Montana’s Barns


Concerned that historic barns are disappearing from the landscape, authors Chere Jiusto and Christine W. Brown and photographer Tom Ferris traveled the state to document those that still exist. “More than anything, this book is a call to action,” the authors write in the book’s introduction. “It is an effort to turn attention to these buildings and to raise interest in preserving them before they are gone.” Jiusto and Brown uncovered stories from a time when more Montanans were farm people who came together to build barns that would preserve traditions for future generations. They also uncovered stories of people who are committed to preserving those barns today. “The most effective way to ensure that historic barns do not fall into the forgotten realms of history is to use them, to reinvent their purpose, and to reinvigorate their usefulness,” write the authors.

Out of more than 6,000 historic Montana barns identified in a statewide survey, Jiusto and Brown tell the stories of about 140 of the most beautiful and unusual across the state. The barns range from a luxurious horse barn built by copper baron Marcus Daly that was remodeled into a single-family home; to the Kent Dairy round barn, remodeled for use as a restaurant; to the Jemison barn in Cascade County, which still houses sheep; to neglected barns that seem ready to topple over.

The history of each barn is featured along with the stories of the families who built them, worked them, and preserve them today. The stories tell of traditional community barn raisings, dances and other events that took place in them, and family ties that have lasted to the present day. “Barns are part of the fabric of the history of our state,” said Governor Brian Schweitzer. “They are a beautiful and useful reminder of our heritage.”

The stories in Hand Raised also portray the reality of rural life. Gayle and Katy Chafin worked the Selway Ranch in Beaverhead County from 1956 to 1987. Their daughter-in-law Carleen took them back to the ranch for what she thought could be their last visit to it.

The couple was asked what they remembered most about the “fabulous” old barn – most of those gathered with them expecting something poetic. “The answer came after a long minute, in the plainspoken style of a Montana rancher,” the authors write: “I mainly remember that it was a lot of work.”

The book is illustrated with photographs by Tom Ferris that show the unassuming elegance of each barn. The result is a beautiful, coffee table–style book with more than 500 color images.

“Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana” is available at local bookstores, or can be ordered directly from the Society by calling 1-800-243-9900, or online at www.montanahistoricalsociety.org. The 305-page book with more than 500 color illustrations sells for $39.95 in hard cover.
Just What is a Traditional Wedding?

Maggie Pierson and Harry E. Crossley celebrated their 1905 wedding, not at the local church, parsonage, or courthouse, but at the Flathead County Fair.

Their story is told in “I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings,” a new book from the Montana Historical Society Press by Martha Kohl. I Do combines engaging stories like the Crossleys’ with insightful analysis to show how historical circumstances affected the ways ordinary Montanans married.

The Crossley wedding took place in Kalispell as part of a promotional event at the fair. Three couples applied for the chance to get married at the grandstand in exchange for over two hundred dollars’ worth of prizes donated by Kalispell merchants. Four thousand people turned out to witness the event.

Through wedding stories recounted in letters, diaries, reminiscences, oral histories, and newspaper articles, author Martha Kohl explores the lives of ordinary Montanans. She examines how their weddings changed over time and what this ritual tells us about the social, political, and economic trends that shaped Montana.

“Because people of all classes, ethnic groups, and religions marry, weddings offer a window into areas of life often hidden from view,” Kohl argues in the introduction.

Kohl also explores the cultural traditions of many of Montana’s diverse tribal and ethnic groups. “I hope this book introduces readers unfamiliar with Montana’s multifaceted history to this vibrant, multicultural place,” she writes.

Beyond the academic importance of Kohl’s research, weddings simply make for good stories—the woman who escaped from her bedroom window to run off with a neighboring rancher, the priest who planned to combine wedding mass with an eighth-grade graduation; the couple who courted for years by mail before managing to overcome the vast distance that separated them.

Readers will find themselves enthralled, both by Montana’s vibrant, multicultural past and by one of America’s most enduring traditions and important rites of passage.

I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings is available at local bookstores, or can be ordered directly from the Society by calling 1-800-243-9900, or online at www.montanahistoricalsociety.org. The 224-page book with more than 70 historic illustrations sells for $34.95 in hard cover.
Anyone Hungry?
By Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson, PR and Marketing Committee Chair
Missoula Public Library

Uncle Jim's Apricot Pork Chops...Lemon Spaghetti...Chocolate Amaretto Cheesecake...Dried Cranberry and Almond Biscotti...

Sound good? If so, these are just four of the 300 wonderful recipes featured in the MLA Cookbook, A Literary Feast: A Collection of Recipes from MLA. For a mere $10, you can concoct delightful dishes to keep your home family and your library family happy and well-fed.

A Literary Feast is available via the MLA Website at http://www.mtlib.org/Store/cookbooks.html. Be sure to get your copy and try out those pork chops!

Also, don't forget—you can get your cool MLA license plate at your local motor vehicle office.

Proceeds from both these projects benefit your library organization, the Montana Library Association.

Also, the PR & Marketing Committee needs members. Please e-mail Lisa at lisamj@missoula.lib.mt.us if you are interested in serving on this very fun committee.