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HOPE IS NOT OUR STRATEGY—WE ARE

Times of tragedy demand innovation. We are all now experiencing a time of local, regional, and national tragedy. As of this writing, more than 92,000 Americans have lost their lives to a virulent strain of coronavirus—this number will continue to climb. While the state of Montana has not experienced the level of suffering and pain other states and communities across our nation have, on Friday, March 13, of this year, our way of life changed. On this date, Montana became the 49th state to confirm positive cases of the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, commonly known as COVID-19. Almost immediately, the landscape of our profession dramatically changed as libraries across the state altered their service modalities. These impacts were felt by school, public, academic, and special libraries. Each of our institutions have felt the ripple effects caused by deaths in our communities, economic impacts, school closures, and unemployment experienced by our neighbors, friends, and community partners. In a sense, our level of comfort was greatly disturbed—as it should be. But I remain optimistic that our current situation need not necessitate the tithing of our dreams and goals and aspirations for our institutions in the donation plate of uncertainty. While each of our organizations will most certainly face challenges and discomfort in the upcoming months, these challenges and discomforts ought to be viewed through the many prisms of opportunities awaiting to be discovered. This exploration of opportunities in no way diminishes the reality of what this virus has wrought to our nation. It is certain that more pain will be experienced in our state and across our country as this virus continues. In our efforts to mitigate risks to ensure the health of our communities, we wrestle with being mindful that our actions not have a deleterious effect to those we serve—this is not an easily balanced proposition. I wish I had advice to give to each of you for what this means for each of your organizations. Unfortunately, I do not.

Kahlil Gibran, the great Lebanese poet, warns: "Comfort is a stealthy thing that enters the house as a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master." Every community we serve across our state is unique to the others; each library has different strengths and weaknesses. Experience with the virus has been different in each of the state's 56 counties. But one thing is certain: our core values of who we are as professionals within our organizations has prepared us to address our current discomforts. The onus is on our shoulders to show our patrons and partners and the professionals we serve a new meaning within the definition of library. We will need to continue to show our communities that through collaboration—near and far—we will remain steadfast in our own unique ways to serve them; we need to highlight how public, school, academic, and special libraries are united together to help each other succeed during this time while also stymieing the transmission of this virus to the people we serve. Slavoj Žižek, a Slovenian philosopher, states that “even horrible events can have unpredictable positive consequences.” For example, at the Billings Public Library we have been able to be a safe place for the children of first responders and medical personnel during our time of closure, a
necessary service that can best be described as a “positive consequence.” There are certain to be more of these examples as the battle continues against this virus.

As the title of this message states: Hope is not our strategy. By combining our efforts, we become our best strategy. We need to be mindful and proactive. We need to think of new and advantageous partnerships. We need to be open to new ideas and sunset older or outmoded ones. We need to be hopeful, but we cannot allow hope to be the heart of our strategy. Hope will not change reality. The heart of our strategy will always be us. Our action—or inaction—will determine how we succeed as professionals, organizations, and communities. This unification effort cannot be done in silos. Individually we are not as strong as the collective; by using your voice, your leadership, your strength, our library community will prosper. I promise to do my best in my role of leadership, but I need your help. I never thought that my first correspondence as the President of the Montana Library Association would contain this type of narrative. I ask that you allow me to serve you as you serve your communities and to allow yourself to serve others as we come together. Let us all continue to do our part to help our communities and organizations stay safe and healthy during this pandemic. I thank you all for this opportunity to lead our Association. Be well. Be safe.

**Gavin J. Woltjer**  
MLA President  
Acting Public Information Officer, City of Billings  
Library Director, [Billings Public Library](https://www.billingslibrary.org)

(Photo by Banik Communications)

[ Gavin Woltjer can be reached at woltjerg@billingsmt.gov ]

**Mary Anne Hansen's Update**

Greetings from your MLA Past-President!

I hope you’re all safe and well in this uncertain time. While I’m still deeply disappointed that we didn’t get to have our 2020 annual conference, I know that we had no other choice but to cancel. MLA 2021 under MLA President Gavin Woltjer’s leadership will be awesome! We’ll be back better and stronger next year...!  

What are you all doing during this lengthy quarantine, besides just trying to hang onto your sanity?! My heart goes out to those of you with kiddos at home. I’m often thinking of those of you who are juggling home-schooling of sorts, teleworking, managing a household while nurturing your family relationships, etc. I have days where I can barely handle five sets of pets’ eyeballs staring at me and awaiting entertainment, snuggles, and walks, off and on all day long. Like many of you, I’m keeping in touch with family and friends through Zoom gatherings, Face Time, Social Media, email, and phone calls. I’m also listening to more diverse music, which started when I put together a Pandemic Playlist. While this may sound morbid, it’s been a fun, creative venture to find songs I wasn’t all that familiar with that fit, some more loosely than others, into the pandemic theme (for example, “Don’t Stand So Close to Me” – Sting and the Police, and “It’s the End of the World as We Know It” – R.E.M.). I see on social media and just from Googling that many people are also doing this! My hubby and I listen to it when we go for long Saturday drives with our pooches, seeking new hiking trails and water opportunities for Otis and Stella to take a dip. PM me if you have song suggestions... I’m still adding to it!

Starting in the next issue Gavin will be sharing what he is reading, I thought in my final message as President I would do the same. One book which I’m still thinking deeply about off and on each day, and
which we discussed during a recent Extreme History Project Zoom book discussion, is “Waiting for the Revolution: A Montana Memoir,” by Jo Anne Salisbury Troxel, a long-time friend of mine and my husband’s, plus retired English teacher at Bozeman Senior High School; I never had her, but at least one of my brothers did, and he loved her as a teacher. It’s quite a gripping tale of a largely difficult and brutal upbringing, yet one also of resilience and just making do, starting in Plentywood, then on to Billings, then Arlee. I highly recommend it. It will give you a personal account of Montana life almost 100 years ago. Jo Anne will turn 87 in August, and I’m so happy to say that she’s alive and well in Bozeman, although she sure misses jazz concerts right now. Quarantine is especially hard on the elderly who live alone, from what I’ve heard. My heart goes out to her and those in similar circumstances.

I’m ashamed to say that this Montana native hasn’t read as many Montana authors nor works about Montana as I should, so with that thought in mind, I’m now reading Russell Rowland’s “Fifty-six Counties: A Montana Journey.” Would love to hear thoughts about it from anyone that has read it.

Another true Montana tale that I’d highly recommend is “The Lady Rode Bucking Horses: The Story of Fannie Sperry Steele, Woman of the West,” by another friend of mine and my hubby’s, Dee Marvine. Dee and her artist husband used to live in Big Timber, but have since moved closer to family in Maryland. Born on a Montana homestead in 1887, Fannie Sperry was a remarkable woman who, pun intended, bucked tradition and dared to ride horses like a man, straddling them, rather than riding side-saddle. She also went on to become a world champion, twice winning the title of Lady Bucking Horse Champion of the World. She was also the first woman in Montana to be granted an outfitter’s license; additionally, she was named a charter member of the Cowboy Hall of Fame. A fun read!

Hang in there everyone, and try not to be too hard on yourself if you’re not super-mom or super-achiever during this crazy time. If you’re getting by, you’ve got a leg up on this pandemic.

Take good care,

Mary Anne Hansen, MLA Past President, 2020-2021
Professor/Research Services Librarian, Montana State University Library

[ Mary Anne Hansen can be reached at mhansen@montana.edu ]

Debbi Kramer's Update

What a strange time we're experiencing! I never thought I would live through something like this in my lifetime.

As of April 15th all the refund checks have been processed and sent to library directors and exhibitors. MLA took in $57,001.68 from exhibitors, registrations and donations for the 2020 annual conference. Unfortunately the conference was cancelled and MLA had to refund all but $2,099.60. This amount was from exhibitors, attendees and donations. MLA wants to thank all those who donated their registration fees back to MLA. MLA will be on a very constricted budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year due to loss of revenue from the annual conference. It is vitally important than MLA find either another revenue source or ramp up the amount of memberships that are collected. As this is a legislative year, MLA is counting on every librarian, trustee and library worker to join or renew his or her membership in MLA so MLA can work harder for you. Dues can be paid at any time for the upcoming membership year.
As you know I am staying on one more year as Executive Director to help MLA steer through these unprecedented times. MLA plans to offer both in person and online solutions for the Fall Retreat, offline and annual conference. MLA hopes these solutions will benefit all Montana librarians.

I am busy at the present time working with the Budget Committee to get the 2020-21 preliminary budget in place. After the Budget Committee endorses the budget, it will go to the entire MLA board at our June meeting for approval. MLA has scheduled its Summer Board Meeting for June 19th. It is our hope to hold an in person meeting in Helena on that date, but if this format is not possible, we will hold an online meeting. The online or in person meeting is open to the public and more information will be available closer to the meeting.

Please take the time in the coming weeks to check out the MLA website. Webmaster Stephen Haddad is busy making updates to the officer, division, committee and interest group chairs lists. New forms will also be available soon. Don’t forget MLA has Professional Development grants available. The board is researching member software that will be put in place soon after the new membership year begins on July 1. This software will streamline the membership process and also the software will help with conference and retreat registrations. As soon as software is purchased and in place, MLA will post a message to Wired.

MLA hopes you have enjoyed the online workshops it has been presenting each Thursday through April and May with help from the Montana State Library. Those attending will be asked to fill out a survey in the near future so MLA can see if the workshops were beneficial to those attending.

In closing I’ve added conference statistics for those interested. Take care of yourselves and everyone stay safe.

2020 Projected Conference Statistics:

- Attendees: 236 registered, 15 additional exhibitors, 17 unregistered speakers; Total attendees: 268
- Revenues: Exhibitors: 23 booths, $6,897.60; Registrations: $50,104.08
- Programs: 4 pre-conference, 41 workshops

Debbi Kramer, Executive Director
Montana Library Association, Inc.

[ Debbi Kramer can be reached at debkmla@hotmail.com ]

- EDITOR'S MESSAGE -

by DeHanza Kwong, Co-Editor of Focus

Hello everyone,

Thank you for checking out the June 2020 issue of MLA FOCUS. My name is DeHanza Kwong and I am pleased to be your co-editor for the upcoming season. I am the Reference Librarian at Butte-Silverbow Public Library and a reviewer for the School Library Journal. My current passion is making sure the Park Street Community Garden in Butte has the best season ever! I am grateful to be joining experienced co-editor Star Bradley from the Montana State University Library.
A huge thank you to outgoing FOCUS co-editor Sarah Creech of Belgrade Community Library. She has done an amazing job with FOCUS and is an all-around hard-working, talented individual. Shout out to her and all the extraordinary Montana librarians dealing with this unprecedented time. Your courage is inspiring.

- MLA COMMITTEE AND DIVISION NEWS -

**New ASLD Vice-Chair**

New ASLD Vice-Chair

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Sydnie Tallman, the newly elected vice-chair to the Academic and Special Libraries Division. Sydnie is a Library Assistant at the Montana State Law Library and is currently working on her MLIS at the Syracuse University iSchool. Prior to working for the Montana State Law Library, she was the Director of the Sylvan Learning Center. Sydnie is a mother of three wonderful boys. Congratulations Sydnie!

*Stephan Licitra*
ASLD Chair

(Photo by Dave Tallman)

**New Co-Chair for PLD**

Dear public librarians,

I hope this finds you all happy and well.

I have the results of the electronic voting for our new co-chair position. I’m sure that it will surprise no one that Mitch Grady has won in a landslide. Below are the results, if anyone is in disbelief.

This year has already upended our work and our lives. I hope this year will allow us to work together towards new heights in Public Library Service. Please let either me or Mitch know what we can do to help.

* Answered: 65
* Skipped: 0

Answer Choices
- Mitch Grady
- Other (please specify)

Responses
- Mitch Grady 100.00% (65 responses)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/B04ko1uijsjmUy_2E_2BqMwDnpgCdJHFaOGQ4a5M4nEhGei_3D?tab_clicked=1 [surveymonkey.com]>
New SLD Co-Chair

Congratulations to our new MLA School Library Division Co-Chair, Vic Mortimer! I’m looking forward to working with Vic and I’m sure he is going to do a wonderful job representing school librarians on the MLA Board.

Brittany Alberson
Teacher-Librarian
Bozeman High School

Calling All School Librarians!

Submitted by Brittany Alberson

Greetings to our fellow school librarians! We are Brittany Alberson and Vic Mortimer, your School Library Division Co-Chairs in MLA, and we need your input. We are putting together this year’s SLD Summer Retreat and, given what a unique year this has been, we are proceeding accordingly. This year’s Summer Retreat will be entirely online and we want the sectionals to correspond with the particular needs of school librarians in Montana right now.

Where are you finding your professional practice lagging?

What challenges have you faced this year (both pre- and post-COVID-19)?

What trainings, tips, and conversations would be most useful to you in your daily work as a school librarian moving forward?

Please take a moment to fill out this brief survey and help inform this year’s Summer Retreat. Your input is incredibly valuable. Those who fill out the survey will be entered to win a year’s membership to MLA. Please respond to the survey before June 13th.

More details about registration and technical logistics for the 2020 SLD Summer Retreat will be forthcoming so keep your ear to the proverbial WIRED ground and best of luck with the remainder of the school year. You are all operating under extraordinary circumstances and we are here to support you!
- AFFILIATE NEWS -

2020 YALSA Teens’ Top Ten Nominees Announced

The 2020 YALSA Teens’ Top Ten nominees have been announced. A video announcing the nominees and an annotated list is available on the Teens’ Top Ten web page. Teens are encouraged to read the nominees throughout the summer to prepare for the national Teens’ Top Ten vote, which will take place August 15 - October 12. The ten nominees that receive the most votes will be named the official 2020 Teens’ Top Ten. As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has put a strain on in-person library experiences, this is a great opportunity to better utilize digital resources. We encourage teens to engage in digital resources, especially e-books and audiobooks offered by their libraries.

Anna Lam
Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)
alam@ala.org

New Content on Montana Newspapers

The Montana Historical Society is pleased to announce that new Montana content is available to search and browse on the web site CHRONICLING AMERICA.

Newly Available Titles
The Circle Banner (11/27/1914-12/26/1924)
The Grass Range Community Foundation has made it possible to complete the digitization of the Grass Range Review, now available from April 1917-Nov 1942.

Chronicling America is hosted by the Library of Congress as part of the National Digital Newspaper Program, which is funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). It is freely accessible to all Internet users with no subscriptions or fees required. To learn more about the National Digital Newspaper Program or Chronicling America, visit https://www.loc.gov/ndnp/ or contact us at MHSDigital@mt.gov.

Natasha Hollenbach
Digital Projects Librarian
Montana Historical Society
nhollenbach@mt.gov

2020 Treasure State Award Winners

2020 RESULTS TREASURE STATE AWARD

1ST Place- SERGEANT RECKLESS by Patricia McCormick
4,559 Votes

2nd Place- WHO WILL BELL THE CAT? by Patricia C. McKissack
1,952 Votes

3rd Place- VOLCANO DREAMS by Janet Fox
1,035 Votes

4th Place- IZZY GIZMO by Pip Jones
862 Votes

5th Place- THE UNEXPECTED LOVE STORY OF ALFRED FIDLEDUCKLING by Timothy Basil Ering
675 Votes

TOTAL VOTES CAST-9,083
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS-98

2021 Treasure State Award Nominees

THE CRAYON MAN: THE TRUE STORY OF THE INVENTION OF CRAYOLA CRAYONS by Natascha Biebow

THE TALE OF THE TIGER SLIPPERS by Jan Brett

WE DON’T EAT OUR CLASSMATES by Ryan T. Higgins

HONEY, THE DOG WHO SAVED ABE LINCOLN by Shari Swanson

IF I BUILT A SCHOOL by Chris Van Dusen
MLA Needs You!
Submitted by Carmen Clark

Hello Montana Library Land. I hope this month finds you well and adjusting to the new normal. As you know, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel this year’s conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. MLA is suffering a great financial loss due to the cancellation. I would urge all of you to renew your membership to MLA this year or if you have never been a member, please think about joining this great organization.

MLA is offering some of the presentations that would have been part of MLA 2020 online. The best part of this is that it is all FREE! No cost to you to attend these great sessions. More information can be found here:


If I haven't persuaded to join MLA yet, I would like to offer a few more good reasons:

- A forum for exchanging information, for solving problems and for learning about the changing world of libraries and information science.
- Workshops, retreats and special seminars for those working in libraries and library trustees and administrative bodies.
- FOCUS, our newsletter, featuring upcoming events and including news about the changing world of Montana libraries.
- "Wired-MT", aka Wired-Montana, the librarians' online list serve.
- Our annual late-April convention, regularly bringing 400 Montana librarians together for conversation, workshops, speakers and fun. Periodically MLA has a joint conference with regional or neighboring states’ library associations.
- Professional development grants to encourage continuing education.
- Recognition to individuals and libraries for outstanding contribution to library services.

You can learn more about joining MLA here:

http://www.mtlib.org/join-mla/

Please let me know if you have any questions about membership or MLA in general.
Carmen Clark
Director-at-Large East
cclark@bozeman.net

Getting Active and Staying Healthy at the Bozeman Public Library!

Submitted by Carmen Clark
Like many of you, we had to rethink our programming in the last few month. From online book club meetings to Zoom Fantasy Short Story Chats, a Facebook Arts & Crafts Challenge and a Facebook Social Distancing Book Club, we are offering many things we have never done in this particular format. It's an adventure.

In the midst of all this, we started two new programs: Mindful Mondays and a Virtual Running Club.

Information about our Virtual Running Club can be found here: https://www.bozemanlibrary.org/events/seasonal-programs/virtual-events/virtual-running-club/

I invite you to join us on this running adventure. I have joined our club as well, despite being a non-runner. We offer a Couch-to-5K and a training routine for a 10K.

The second program I wanted to highlight is our Mindful Mondays.

Local expert Turi Hetherington shares the 10-step protocol of iRest Yoga Nidra Meditation. iRest is short for Integrative Restoration, a contemporary adaptation of the ancient teachings of yoga and meditation. It weaves together eastern philosophy with modern-day psychology and neuroscience to bring a sense of balance and ease to body, mind and spirit.

As an evidence-based meditation protocol, iRest is used at US Veterans Affairs hospitals and military bases across the country. Research shows iRest effectively reduces stress, insomnia, anxiety, depression, chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, and enhances joy, equanimity and wellbeing in daily life.

The classes are recorded and available on our YouTube channel anytime.

More information about our Mindful Mondays can be found here: https://www.bozemanlibrary.org/events/seasonal-programs/virtual-events/mindful-mondays/

Carmen Clark | Department Head Adult Programming and Outreach
Cates Family Grateful for the Continued Scholarship

Submitted by Kristen Cates Caldwell

On behalf of my brother, Patrick, and our dad, Dennis, I want to thank you all for keeping mom's legacy alive through the Sheila Cates Memorial Scholarship.

It's hard to believe almost 27 years have gone by since our mom passed away. It's hard to believe we've spent more of our life without her than with her. But perhaps it's harder to believe the latter point because of the many memories we still cherish of her as our mother and her time spent serving Montana's libraries through her work at the Office of Public Instruction and then the Montana State Library.

These days we'd like to hope she'd be enjoying retirement – sipping on a Diet Coke (with lime) while reading a cheesy romance novel. I imagine she'd be FaceTiming with her three grandchildren quite a bit. Mallory Mae Cates (Patrick's oldest), bears her middle name and her eyes, too. She's 13 going on 30. Cooper Terry Cates, 10 almost 11, is ON THE MOVE all the time. An avid soccer player, there's no doubt she'd be pulling her lawn chair up to the center line to cheer her grandson on with the same fervor she did when Patrick was his age. Then there's Turner Alexander Caldwell (who carries her maiden name as his middle name), who at 18-months is trying to read every book put in front of him. A good section of his library would probably be made up of ALA recommended books she purchased.

But maybe she'd still be working. After all, she loved her job – a lot. She traveled all over the state and country, soaking up knowledge, helping her fellow librarians. Patrick and I benefitted from all these travels with a well-stocked library at home, many books bearing the autographs of famous children and young adult authors like Katherine Patterson or Patricia MacLachlan.

She was dedicated to her work, her community, her faith and her kids. We both carry a little piece of her work ethic with us.

Patrick, his wife Kristina, and their two kids now live in Belgrade, where he serves as the Saddle Peak Elementary Principal. As for me, Kristen; I live in Vancouver, Wash. (a suburb of Portland) and work for The United Methodist Churches in Oregon and Idaho as their communications manager. When not working, my husband Jonathan and I are busy chasing Turner around the house.

Our dad, Dennis, still lives in Helena, with our amazing stepmom, Kathi Cates. He recently retired from real estate and likes to get out on his motorcycle or go fly fishing (you know, when not under quarantine). Between the two of them they have four children and seven grandchildren.

Several people who worked with our mom close to 30 years ago have gone on to well-deserved retirements, but they still share wonderful stories of her. It never fails that my brother and I go somewhere or run into someone who worked with our mom or was the recipient of one of her scholarships and there is such gratitude and respect for her influence.

The stories always make us smile, laugh or cry happy tears. We deeply appreciate the work of the Montana Library Association and the committee behind the Sheila Cates Memorial Scholarship. She was an amazing mom to us and an incredible librarian and friend to many.
Apply for a Cates Scholarship
Submitted by Lisa Mecklenburg Jackson

Are you currently pursuing a graduate degree in library or information science or school library media, or seeking a school library endorsement?

If so, please consider applying for a Cates Scholarship from MLA. Amounts awarded are typically around $2,000 and can be used for book purchase, tuition assistance, supplies, etc.

The Cates Scholarship application can be found on the MLA Website and is due July 6, 2020 by 5:00 p.m.

If you have any questions about the Cates scholarship or the application process, please contact Lisa (contact information below).

Thanks so much. The committee looks forward to receiving many terrific applications!

Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson
MLA Cates Committee Chair
lisameckjack@gmail.com

Thoughts on COVID-19 at the Billings Public Library
Submitted by Hannah Stewart-Freeman
As I walk through the Billings Public Library in the dark, my presence triggers a motion sensor light to flicker on. I’m not only the first one in the building this morning, I’m the only one that will walk out onto the main floor today. We all know the outdated cliché, libraries are supposed to be quiet. Still, even the strictest libraries have a hum during opening hours. Keyboard keys click as patrons use the computer lab. Newspaper pages turn. Whispers float out from the stacks. Beeps echo from the Circulation desk as materials are checked out. The occasional giggle drifts from the Children’s Area.

Now, the quiet in many libraries is sterile. There is no living hum that makes the walls breathe as the buildings and their staffs provide much needed services to their communities.

In the quiet dark, I reflect on how we got here. A virus. A declaration of emergency. A shelter at home. A slew of safety precautions that meant shutting the doors to many of our routines and creature comforts.

I think about how libraries have continued to serve. Some libraries started a curbside pick-up system immediately. Some, like the BPL, transformed overnight into daycare centers that protect the children of essential healthcare staff while they work to ensure the safety of the vulnerable populations in our towns and cities. We’ve pulled together online, provided virtual programs over social media to inform and entertain our patrons at home.

I also consider how we’ve worked to help those that called the library a part-time home. The homeless. The transients. The runaways. We had to figure out how to reach them after they’d been cut adrift by the shutdown, but it took longer than it should have because we were all floating together in seas of constant change.

The hardest thing next to being closed is figuring out what comes next. How do we help people when we can’t reach them through the old ways? What services can we provide when close contact is forbidden? How do we survive until there is a vaccine?

A librarian with the Billings Public Library recently found an article that mentioned the BPL shutting down during a smallpox epidemic that occurred in 1905. Oddly, this article gave me more hope than anything I had yet read. When the BPL closed its doors for two months in 1905 to stymie the transmission of the smallpox virus it probably felt a lot like the current COVID-19 crisis. To those that had to go home, to stop working, or those that lost their job, it probably felt like the end of days. But now, one hundred and fifteen years later, we don’t remember it. It may be too much to hope that the current coronavirus pandemic fades into oblivion, and nor should it if we are to prepare to protect ourselves from future occurrences. However, the article does show us that things change, memories fade, we find ourselves again, and we keep moving forward in spite of, and indeed because of, hardships and tragedies.

I would encourage all libraries to think to the far future. How can we use this event to better serve? What can we do to support our staff and our patrons? How do we discover best practices to better fit a world that experienced a dramatic transformation? This brave new world may be the “new normal”, but it cannot take away the foundations and values upon which we built our libraries.

As the sun rises through the eastern windows and splashes light across the service desks and rows of books, I can’t help feeling proud and hopeful. No matter how this all shakes out, the point is that libraries will continue to serve in whatever capacity is needed. It’s what we do. We meet new needs. We thrive on change. We consider it our sacred duty and honor to evolve with the times and circumstances to serve our public. We remain a point of light in the darkness.

Hannah Stewart-Freeman
Over One Million Pages of Montana Newspapers

Submitted by Natasha Hollenbach

Over One Million Pages of Montana's newspapers are available online for free. Dating from 1864-2018 and published in 79 Montana towns, the possibilities for research are endless. Whether you are a high school student researching the reactions of Montana's press to Jeanette Rankin's vote against world war (in either 1917 or 1941), a community historian researching the creation of your county and the contentious county seat debate, a genealogist looking for information about family members, a marketing student looking at the way advertising has changed throughout the decades or a literary enthusiast looking at newspaper fiction, Chronicling America and Montana Newspapers provide an opportunity to go back in time and discover what Montanans were reading in their local newspapers.

(Google Map showing the communities with digitized newspapers. Blue dots are on Chronicling America, green are on Montana Newspapers, and black are on both. Screenshot taken May 14, 2020.)

This milestone has taken over a decade to reach and should be recognized for the amount of time, money and effort that has been devoted to it. Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities has provided the backbone of support for these efforts with their funding for the National Digital Newspaper Program of which the Montana Historical Society has been a four-time grant recipient. The Chronicling America website is the result of this national program. Equally deserving of recognition are the 26 Montana institutions who have contributed to Montana Newspapers.

- Baker-Fallon County Library
- Big Sandy-Big Sandy Cultural Fund
- Big Timber-Carnegie Public Library
- Billings-Montana State University Billings Library
- Choteau-Choteau/Teton Public Library
- Dillon-Carson Library, University of Montana Western
- Ekalaka-Carter County Museum
- Eureka-Lincoln County High School Library
- PROGRAMS, PROMOTIONS, PROJECTS -

Bozeman Public Library Book Giveaway
Submitted by Cindy Christin

Staff from the Bozeman Public Library collaborated with the Bozeman Public Schools in giving away books at the three school sites open for school lunch pick-up during the month of May. The books are donations to the Friends of the Library, which have been in storage, as well as some new books purchased by the Library Foundation. Books include board books, picture books, early readers, and chapter books for ages infant through high school.

175 books were given to kids the first week, despite some rainy and cold weather. The Library is open for curbside service starting Monday, May 18, so patrons can put holds on books and pick them up. But the children's staff is excited to see families and be able to give them books while schools and libraries are closed.

Cindy Christin, Children's Services
Bozeman Public Library

Natasha Hollenbach, Digital Projects Librarian, Montana Historical Society

It is always wonderful to hear that people appreciate having these newspapers available. From a librarian telling us that she's using them to create citations for her libraries' vertical files to a genealogist thrilled about the amount of detail found about an ancestor (including when the family cat went missing and was then found), it's affirming to know that these resources are actually being used. We'll keep adding newspapers and improving the experience, and hopefully one day we'll be celebrating having 2 million pages available.
Mansfield Library Participates in Documenting COVID-19 in Missoula County

Submitted by Patti McKenzie

The Mansfield Library is proud to participate in Documenting COVID-19 in Missoula County: A Community Archive Project. The project is designed to collect and save stories from UM and across Missoula County that describe our community’s experiences during the pandemic.

Historians and archivists from Missoula County, the City of Missoula, the University of Montana, the Downtown Missoula Partnership’s “Heritage Missoula” Program and private Missoula businesses have teamed up to create “Documenting COVID-19 in Missoula County: A Community Archive Project.”

The project encourages agencies, organizations and community members, both urban and rural, in Missoula County to document their actions and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and provides a way for this documentation to be collected, maintained and shared as a community archive, according to project coordinator Matt Lautzenheiser, executive director of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula.

Items collected will include documents, emails, notes, videos, online content, oral histories, photos, journals, creative writings, interviews, and public documents from the City of Missoula and Missoula County. In addition, the “Documenting COVID-19 in Missoula County: A Community Archives Project” seeks to engage local community members, online communities, businesses and nonprofits to capture the overall impact of COVID-19 on Missoula County from both a public and a private perspective.

Archives and Special Collections at UM’s Mansfield Library will archive the collected materials and make them available to public officials, scholars and the public after the project wraps up.

“We are living in a truly historic time,” said Donna McCrea, head of Archives and Special Collections. “How we react and respond – as individuals and as a community – will be of interest 10 years from now and 100 years from now. We know that the best way to ensure this content is available to future generations is to gather it proactively right now.”

Missoula county residents can submit written materials, photographs, audio and visual files, and other documents reflecting their experiences during this period using a form on the Mansfield Library’s website.

(Photo by Mark Fritch)
Ready 2 Read Early Literacy Benchmark Report

Submitted by Amelea Kim

The Montana State Library recently conducted a survey of Montana’s public libraries to determine how many libraries offered specific early literacy (0-5) programming, and which libraries participate in Ready 2 Read. The results of this survey will aid in establishing future goals with early literacy efforts in the state, as well as helping identify areas of need.

To view the summary report of this survey, please look at the Early Literacy Benchmark Survey Story Map: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/fa3f23eb4a504770931cf4121ddee074

It merits mentioning also that when the Ready 2 Read program first started in 2009, only five public libraries offered specific early literacy programming, and now a majority of libraries in Montana have a specific early literacy program for their community. That is REMARKABLE progress in a little over a decade and is a testament to the hard work and dedication of Montana librarians.

Please contact Amelea Kim at akim@mt.gov if you have any questions or comments regarding the survey.

Mobile Hot Spots for Loan at Montana Public Libraries

Submitted by Jo Flick

At the May meeting of the Montana State Library Commission, funds were allocated to purchase hot spots and cellular service to increase the availability of hot spots that can be loaned to library patrons throughout Montana. All libraries will receive two hot spots to place into circulation and ten libraries will be selected, based upon need, to receive additional hot spots fully funded with a cellular plan as part of a pilot project to explore how these devices are used by Montanans to access critical services and support economic development activities.

This program is the result of data collected over the past year regarding the increasing role that public libraries play in their communities in providing access to the Internet, and the lack of access to broadband in so much of Montana. According to BroadbandNow (August 2018), Montana has the worst broadband coverage and the worst average Internet speed of all US States. Most job applications require at least a portion of the process be done online, and businesses, ranchers and farmers must file reports online as well, so economic prosperity depends upon access. Libraries can help to fill this gap for the most needy and least served Montanans with this program. According to the 2020 study on The State of Broadband Connectivity and Related IT Infrastructure in Montana’s Public Libraries, one quarter of public libraries in Montana are the sole source of free Internet access in their respective communities.

During the COVID-19 crisis response, the need for making Internet access mobile in communities has become even more apparent and pressing. As library buildings were shuttered across the Treasure State in March and April, there was increasing concern that those that depend on WiFi at their public library were left without access for their suddenly growing critical needs: distance learning for children at home, applying for unemployment benefits, seeking telemedicine options to avoid a trip to a healthcare facility, and ordering necessities for home delivery, to name a few.

Montana State Librarian, Jennie Stapp said, “By providing mobile hot spots to libraries, and through the pilot study, we hope to expand access now, and learn more about the impacts of offering cellular-
data devices to Montana’s library patrons so that we can best support Montanans to thrive.”

For more information about the activities and services provided by your local library, check out their website, call, or follow them on social media.

The Montana State Library helps all organizations, communities, and Montanans thrive through excellent library resources and services. For more information about the Montana State Library, visit http://msl.mt.gov. For more information about the Commission meeting, contact Jennie Stapp, State Librarian, at (406) 444-3116 or via e-mail at: jstapp2@mt.gov.

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Submissions Open for the August 2020 Issue!

REMINDER: The submission deadline for the August newsletter is July 20. Please email your library news, micro-reviews & photos (with captions & attributions) to mlaFOCUSeditor@gmail.com Thank You!

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