FOCUS

a newsletter of the Montana Library Association

[October 2020 Vol. 38 Issue 5]

- IN THIS ISSUE -

President's Message - Hear from MLA President Gavin Woltjer

What is the President Reading - Hear what Gavin Woltjer is reading this month

Executive Director's Message - Hear from Debbi Kramer

Editor's Message - Hear from Star Bradley

Affiliate News
New Content on Montana Newspapers
Montana's History Magazine Adds Awards to Their Collection

Articles
MLA Needs You!
Getting Active and Staying Healthy at BPL
Cates Family Grateful for the Continued Scholarship
Cates Scholarship
Thoughts on COVID-19 at the Billings Public Library
One Million Pages of Montana

Programs, Promotions & Projects
Virtual Banned Books Trivia in Bozeman
2020 Cates Scholarship Recipient Announced
UM Literary Journal Frontier and Midland Now Available Online
ImagineIF Launches Family-Friendly Civic Literacy Programming
MLA Migrates to Wild Apricot Membership Software
Gavin Woltjer’s Update

Make a Difference

I hope this message finds you well and in good spirits. This summer has posed some great challenges. Besides the ongoing challenge of the pandemic, many of our communities have also had to deal with smoke from the many wildfires burning in neighboring states, on the West Coast, and from within our own state itself. Additionally, many of our communities are still addressing economic uncertainty while also navigating the different modalities of schooling our children. Needless to say, our plates are full. But it would be remiss of me to neglect to say how inspired I continued to be during these times because of each of you. While I do not want to be dismissive of all the aforementioned challenges, in many conversations that I have had the ability to have with some of you, I am repeatedly reminded of the many outstanding things you are all doing to keep the notion—as febrile and frenetic as it may be—of maintaining a continuity of services to our communities. From curbside services to functioning as a meal site, from being census champions to allowing limited public interaction within your facilities, we continue to rise, to do meaningful work, and to be essential—whatever that word means to you and your community. I hope you are able to take a moment and celebrate these accomplishments. (Of course, after this brief celebration, there are always new challenges eagerly awaiting us!)

It is important to remember that during times when our energy reserves are being constantly depleted we are mindful to fill these reserves through fellowship and professional development. The upcoming Fall Retreat is a great opportunity and resource to both have fellowship with our colleagues from across the state and to also learn from these individuals—even if we are only interacting virtually. Many of you may have heard me say this before: In the end, we are all library professionals. Sure, how we go about our day-to-day business is different depending on the type of library we work for. And, yes, each of our communities are different and that influences what endeavors we partake in or not—but, in the end, we all have the common purpose of making libraries better for those we serve. With this sentiment in mind, I encourage you to engage with Fall Retreat. Even if you think a program may not be fully aligned to how your library operates or even if the topic is focused on one specific area that is not “your area,” think about the information and make it your own. Apply the insight. Think about how the information pertains to you and your library, and work that information into the daily operations. I am convinced that learning from each other will always be the truest course of action to becoming better professionals.

Finally, I want to thank you. Many of you have emailed or phoned me asking how you can better engage with MLA. The simple fact that this question is being asked by many of you leads me to believe that the future of our organization is promising. For the immediacy, I ask that you attend Fall Retreat. After Fall Retreat, I ask you to think of a program that you could offer at the 2021 MLA Conference. While there are still many unknowns about the 2021 MLA Conference logistics, one thing is certain:
Montana library professionals are full of ideas. Let’s share these ideas. And as audience members, let’s figure out how the information relates to our own professional sphere. In the end, I think one thing will be fully realized: we can all make a difference in all that we do.

_Gavin J. Woltjer_
MLA President
Acting Public Information Officer, City of Billings
Library Director, Billings Public Library

(Photograph by Banik Communications)

---

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

---

**- What is the President Reading? -**

I love this time of year. The leaves are putting on their dazzling display of beauty, there is a crisp freshness in the air (never mind the smoke!), and the days’ warmer temperatures are overtaken by the coolness of night. This time of year also signifies that Halloween will soon be here. And since we are all already wearing masks, I thought it a good time to get a jumpstart on reading scary stories. I hope you consider adding the following anthologies to both your own personal collection and your library’s collection. Enjoy!

*_Miscreations: Gods, Monstrosities, & Other Horrors_* edited by Doug Murano and Michael Bailey
(Written Backwards, 2020)

_Miscreations_ is a treat. (Sorry, I needed to get one Halloween pun in these reviews.) By this I mean that this anthology by Bram Stoker Award winning editors, Murano and Bailey, hits all the necessary reading buttons: incredible writing, diverse voices, and originality. Encompassing both established and new voices, Miscreations is really a perfectly assembled collage of what horror writing is all about today. Some of the stories showcase subtle, intelligent moments of terror; some of the stories provide more visceral dread, the kind of fright where there are not enough lights in the house to turn on. Between the spectrum of these points, an arrangement of voices invites the reader to explore the many different shadows, to seek out what lurks around the bend; and the reader will not walk away from this collection of stories without at least a handful of them stuck in their mind, almost as if the images these wordsmiths conjure slowly dig and burrow deeper into one’s memory. But it is not only the stories that provide frights; throughout the anthology, as if they were surgically implanted, dark poetry resides. And while this poetry offers a momentary respite from the monsters, don’t be lulled in by their lyrical beauty—for they provide different types and moments of tension and angst. To leave this micro-review without mentioning the incredible forward by Alma Katsu (The Hunger) would be a disservice. Like any great carnival barker, Katsu encourages you to take that first step toward the unknown, to test your stamina and gaze into the mysterious void—but beware: the void always stares back and never blinks.

Reviewer’s note: Woltjer and Murano attended college together and may or may not have partaken in nights of tomfoolery, imbibing, and storytelling.

_*The Valancourt Book of World Horror Stories Vol. 1_* edited by James D. Jenkins and Ryan Cagle
(Valancourt, 2020)
Jenkins and Cagle proffer a stimulating question in their editor’s forward to this anthology: “What if there were a whole world of great horror literature out there being produced by writers in distant lands, in books you couldn’t access and languages you couldn’t read?” (7). As a monoglot, this constant reminder that there are stories around the world—in languages I will never speak—populate geographic areas shrouded in mystery that I will never visit haunts me. I want to read it all! If you share this sentiment, you are in for another treat. (Dang, I did it again.) Valancourt Books has gathered 21 tales from around the globe to scratch that horror reading itch. The breadth of these tales—classic gothic, psychological terror, physical horror, peculiar and odd surrealism and satire—in most cases appearing for the first time in English, provides readers of all interests that unique perspective that horror—no matter the country, the political structure, religion, or any other socially constructed label of said place—is relatable, constant, and knows no boundaries. Voices from 19 countries, across five continents, coming from 13 different languages, entertains and tantalizes the imagination throughout this collection. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of this anthology, aside from the stories, comes from one of the editors: Jenkins. Not only has this incredible editor helped assemble this tapestry of dark voices, but he also translated no less than 14 of these delightfully dark tales of the macabre.

Gavin J. Woltjer
MLA President
Acting Public Information Officer, City of Billings
Library Director, Billings Public Library

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

- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE -

Debbi Kramer's Update

The new membership year for the Montana Library Association began again on July 1. If you haven't renewed your dues, your membership will lapse as of September 30th. Once MLA has a “Members Only” section on the MLA website you will not be able to access valuable information that will benefit you as an MLA member as well as your library. Please pay your dues as soon as possible so you don’t miss out on any membership opportunities.

I have been busy the last couple of month getting all them membership directory information into the new Wild Apricot membership database. The membership database and website is still a work in progress and information is being added daily. Announcement emails will go out at intervals to keep MLA members and non-members informed. https://mlai.wildapricot.org/

The Academic-Special Library Division and Public Library Division chairs have been busy coordinating and planning all the programs for the 2020 Virtual Fall Retreat. This year’s theme is “Libraries in Interesting Times.” The virtual conference will be Sunday, October 18 & Monday, October 19. Programs have been selected and an email announcement will be following soon with program descriptions and speaker biographies. It will be MLA’s first virtual conference and MLA hopes all those who register will be pleased with the content and Zoom platform presentation.

I have completed the yearly non-profit tax return for the 2019 fiscal year. The board will audit the return and vote on its acceptance at the Fall Board meeting scheduled for Monday, October 19th from 1 to 4 pm. This board meeting is a virtual board meeting and everyone is invited to attend. Log in information will be sent out a week before the meeting.
It's officially Fall and I love watching the leaves change color. Of course with the changing of the season we get things like bears where we don't normally see bears! I had a very Montana experience as I was writing this piece, I looked outside and there was a bear just sauntering through. There are some things that never get old, for me seeing a bear is one of those.

Fall also brings the annual ALA Banned Books Week. This year the Bozeman Banned Books Trivia night had to shift gears and move to a virtual format. A big shout out to all of the committee members for making this first ever virtual Banned Books event a success! You can get the details in the article by Corey Fifles. But suffice it to say that the committee had a good time, and from all accounts the participants enjoyed themselves too.

My mini-book review this month is for *The Parade* by Dave Eggers. I wasn't sure what to expect with this book but for the most part I enjoyed it. If anyone is planning on reading it or just doesn't want a spoiler STOP reading now!

The basic story line is two men who work for a large corporation go to a foreign country, it's not clear exactly where, and work on paving a road. This purpose of the road is to reunite a war torn country that has recently found peace. The two main characters are almost exact opposites. One is a company man who has done this type of work many times and just wants to keep to the timeline. The other is on his first job with the company and wants to fully experience the local culture. (reminder, if you don't want a spoiler you should stop reading now) What really got me about this book was the ending. WOW. That's all I have to say, WOW. I did NOT see that coming, at all. There is a huge surprise at the end of the book that almost ruined the whole book for me. I was so shocked and disturbed by the ending that I had to think about it for a few days before I could fully wrap my head around what Eggers was trying to say. If you've ever read anything by Dave Eggers then you know that he usually has a not so subtly veiled jab at some element of society. The ending was exactly that. What I thought was going to be an ending of redemption and coming together ended up being almost exactly the opposite. In the end the road wasn't a road to redemption at all, but a road to ruin.

END OF SPOILERS

Looking ahead for MLA the Fall Retreat is fast approaching, while not at Chico this year the programming still has much to offer. Being in a virtual format we do miss the beauty of Chico, but it also allows for attendance by folks who normally don't have the chance to make the trip. More information is at the end of the newsletter. Also, if you are thinking of submitting a proposal for the MLA conference this spring the deadline is October 30. I encourage people to submit a proposal if they've never presented before. MLA is a great way to get that experience in a very friendly environment.
Last but not least, a special thank you to Sarah Creech for coming back to help edit this issue. Thanks Sarah!!

Star Bradley
Co-Editor MLA Focus

[ Star Bradley can be reached at estrella.bradley@montana.edu ]

- Committee & Division News -

2020 Cates Scholarship Recipient Announced

On behalf of the MLA Sheila Cates Scholarship* Committee, it is my pleasure to report that we are awarding one Cates Scholarships for this fall. This scholarship will be put towards education for a Montana librarian working to receive a Master's degree in Library Science.

Our Cates Scholarship recipient this year is Robert Mueller ($2,000).

Robert is a Senior Circulation Assistant at Missoula Public Library and is in the midst of pursuing his MLIS from the University of Alabama. Most immediately, Robert plans on utilizing his education to make the new Missoula Public Library building a success. Local nonprofit entities are sharing the building with the goal of making the library a community hub. Robert wants to help make these partnerships strong in the hopes of inspiring more libraries in the state to get creative and partner with groups to provide more robust and convenient services.

Please join me in congratulating this wonderful Montana librarian--our 2020 Cates Scholarship winner!

*The Montana Library Association instituted the Sheila Cates Scholarship in 1994 to provide financial support to Montana Library Association members seeking a graduate degree in library and/or information science, a graduate school library media program, or seeking a school library endorsement. The scholarship fund was established in memory of Sheila Cates, who served as Library Development Coordinator at the Montana State Library from 1985 until her death from cancer in 1993. Sheila was named Montana Library Association's Librarian of the Year in 1993. Individuals selected to receive an award from the scholarship fund must show potential for emulating Sheila Cates’ contribution to Montana libraries.

Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson, Chair
lisameckjack@gmail.com

Committee Members:
Della Dubbe
Jo Flick
Mary Anne Hansen
Cherie Heser
Jim Kammerer
Anita Scheetz
- AFFILIATE NEWS -

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**

- Belt Valley Times (Oct 1921-1923) - [https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025296/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025296/)
- Plentywood Herald (1927-1937) - [https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075293/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075293/)
- Western News and the Libby Times (1929-1933) - [https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85053376/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85053376/)
- The Western News (1933-1945) - [https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82006551/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82006551/)
- Montana Labor News (1932-1951) - [https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/)
- Plentywood Herald (1927-1937) - [https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075293/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075293/)
- Sidney Herald (1955-1963) - [https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83004278/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83004278/)

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/](https://www.loc.gov/ndnp/) or contact us at [MHSDigital@mt.gov](mailto:MHSDigital@mt.gov).

Natasha Hollenbach
Digital Projects Librarian
Montana Historical Society
[nhollenbach@mt.gov](mailto:nhollenbach@mt.gov)

Montana's History Magazine Adds Awards to Their Collection

We know that many of your libraries receive Montana The Magazine of Western History. You might like to know that it has garnered several awards recently. David Beyreis, author of "’If you had fought bravely I would have sung for you’: The Changing Roles of Cheyenne Women during Nineteenth-Century Plains Warfare" (Spring 2019) won a prestigious Wrangler Award for Best Short Non Fiction from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City. The awards ceremony has been postponed until Spring 2021, when he and other winners will receive their bronze trophies. Beyreis's article was also a finalist for the Best Western Short Nonfiction award from the Western Writers of America. The winner of the Spur Award for Best Western Short Nonfiction was Flannery Burke for her article titled "Worry, U.S.A.: Dude Ranch Advertising Looks East, 1915-1945," which appeared in the Summer 2019 issue.

Published by the Montana Historical Society since 1951, Montana The Magazine of Western History and its authors have been honored numerous times by both of these national organizations.

Tammy Ryan
[tryan@mt.gov](mailto:tryan@mt.gov)
Montana Historical Society
Bozeman Banned Books Event Goes Virtual

Some of our dear FOCUS readers may remember Bozeman’s Banned Books Trivia Bash - a collaborative trivia event previously held at different local watering holes and replicated at MLA’s fall retreat at Chico Hot Springs in 2019. So much has happened since we last played trivia with our fellow library folks that it may be hard to remember a time before 2020. What a year! This year we departed from our beloved in-person event to hold our first ever Banned Books Bash online! No better way to distract yourself from the news and also safely celebrate your first amendment right. Our Banned Books Committee grew this year, something we had planned on after our 2019 in person event to best serve our area: we added the Belgrade Community Library (and the fantastic librarian/Zoom wizard Sarah Creech) and the Friends of MSU Library group. They joined our existing cohort of librarians and library folk from Bozeman Public Library, MSU Library, ACLU Montana, and supporters from our schools and local business The Country Bookshelf. These new additions to the group were planned before we knew we would be shaking things up with a new format, and while more than a few people on a planning committee might seem excessive, it turned out to be perfect for our online event.

With our traditional library programs being postponed or shifted from in-person to virtual, our committee included both familiar and new joining authorities for Banned Books trivia!

- ARTICLES -

Wrangler Award Winner

“Worry, U.S.A.”
DUDE RANCH ADVERTISING
LOOKS EAST, 1935-1945
by Flannery Burke

Spur Award Winner
online format, and filling a need for social community events for our library patrons and literature lovers around the area. More went into planning a virtual event then just creating new trivia questions and the ever-present marketing struggles - how do you build camaraderie between participants and allow for socially distant discussion on trivia teams? We found the answer in Zoom's breakout rooms feature. Our participants were required to pre-register for the event, with the option to include a team name and captain. This worked out for us to know whose team was whose so we could create the breakout rooms in advance, and place participants in their groupings when they logged on for the event. For solo players, we gave the option to play solo or join an existing team. In the week leading up to the virtual trivia event, we offered two asynchronous trivia quizzes through Kahoot to build anticipation. There were 52 participants in the online quizzes.

The night of the event, we had two Zoom-literate committee members socially distancing in the same physical location to run the technology, along with Belgrade Library Board Member and local celebrity Chrysti the Wordsmith as our emcee for the event. We dubbed ourselves Command Central, and were responsible for sharing the slideshow of trivia questions (and answers when appropriate) to all participants, placing participants in their team breakout rooms for each question, and ensuring the event ran smoothly. Breakout rooms allowed teams who were in different physical locations to discuss answers before submitting to their scorekeeper. Our committee members who did not run Command Central were assigned as scorekeepers to specific teams, and then used a shared spreadsheet to tally scores. We happened to have the perfect amount of scorekeepers to teams- a 1:1 ratio, with some of our scorekeepers willing to take on additional teams if needed. About 30 players participated in this year’s trivia, with another 10 registrants who didn’t show. Prizes were awarded to the winners of each round, as well as an overall winner, a costume contest winner, and a virtual background winner. Prizes were available to pick-up at Bozeman Public Library, with alternatives available.

The event was held on Wednesday, September 30th, and began at 6:30PM. These dates and times may look familiar, as we sent it out on WIRED to encourage participation around the state. We thought librarians around the state might want to join in the fun - and we were right! We had teams from Helena and Billings, as well as from out of state! One of the most interesting parts of the shift to virtual programming has been the reach of programs extending far beyond the area of traditional service. With some time added in for technical difficulties, and adjusting to the new format, this was a two hour event. Please email if you have questions - when all is said and done, we had a lot of fun and did the grunt work so you don’t have to!

Corey Fíles
Bozeman Public Library
Programs and Outreach
cfíles@bozeman.net
UM Literary Journal Frontier and Midland Now Available Online

100 years ago H. G. Merriam, chair of the University of Montana’s English department, launched a journal “to serve as an outlet for the very living literary interest that is on the campus of The State University.” Its editorial board consisted of the students enrolled in his new undergraduate creative writing course. By the 1930s that journal, *The Frontier and Midland*, had gained a national reputation for the quality of its contributions and for its intentional focus on regional writing. Now UM’s Mansfield Library has made the entire run of *Frontier and Midland* available online.

The *Frontier* was one of the first journals to feature content from and about the Northwest. In a 1963 oral history Merriam recalled, “I was conscious of the necessity, if possible, of getting the Northwest states—that is, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana—to realize their common culture...It seemed as if the region had no sense of being a unit, and if possible I hoped that the *Frontier* might help establish some such unity.”

The *Frontier* sought out and published not only poems and short stories, but also diaries and memoirs. Contributors included Wallace Stegner, A.B. Guthrie Jr., Frank Bird Linderman, Grace Stone Coates, James Stevens, William Saroyan, Helen Addison Howard, Dorothy M. Johnson, John Mason Brown, Weldon Kees, Thomas McGrath, Helen Maring and many others. *The Frontier* changed its name after merging with the *Midland* out of Iowa City in the 1930s. Together *The Frontier* and *The Frontier and Midland* were published until 1939, with Grace Stone Coates serving as assistant editor from 1927 to 1939.

In his editorial for the November 1927 issue of *Frontier*, Merriam wrote, “The Northwest is industrially alive and agriculturally alive; it needs to show itself spiritually alive. Culturally it has too long either turned for nourishment toward the East or accented uncourageous, unindigenous “literary”
expression of writers too spiritually imitative and too uninspired. We in this territory need to realize that literature, and all art, is, if it is worth anything at all, sincere expression of real life. And the roots for literature among us should be in our own rocky ground.”

Harold Guy Merriam studied at Oxford as a member of the first class of Rhodes Scholars. He taught at Whitman, Beloit and Reed Colleges before accepting a position at UM in 1919 to teach English literature and chair the UM English department. In the decades that followed Merriam played an important role in the development of Montana and Northwest literature and in the development of UM’s creative writing program. He hosted writers’ conferences, helped to develop the Humanities program at UM, and helped to create and guide the Montana Institute of the Arts.

All issues of Frontier and Frontier and Midland are available online via ScholarWorks at the Mansfield Library. ScholarWorks provides access to the research, creative scholarship, and unique resources produced and curated by University of Montana faculty, students, and staff.

Donna McCrea
donna.mccrea@umontana.edu
Head of Archives and Special Collections University of Montana

ImagineIF Launches Family-Friendly Civic Literacy Programming
In September 2020, ImagineIF Libraries launched a fun, interactive, civic literacy online program encouraging people of all ages to learn about elected government and to engage with civic information.

“Civic literacy is an important means to creating healthy communities,” librarian Megan Glidden said. “When people learn about government and how it works, they become more aware of community issues, experience stronger ties to the larger world, and develop skills that help them participate fully in American life.”

Participants of all ages can sign up for the program online via Beanstack reading challenge software at: imagineiflibraries.beanstack.org. All participants who complete the challenge will receive an ImagineIF tote bag. Adults will be entered to win a $100 visa gift card, funded by the ImagineIF Library Foundation. Participants can also pick up a paper copy of the Civic Literacy Challenge and a free pocket Constitution at any ImagineIF Libraries location.

In addition to the Civic Literacy Challenge, ImagineIF is hosting three non-partisan Civic Literacy online classes through the Montana Conversations programs by Humanities Montana. These classes, led by Julie Edwards of Niche Academy and Stephan Edwards from the University of Montana, will provide an overview of civics in the United States, discuss how to identify trustworthy information, and explore how to participate in representative government at a city, state and national level.

Humanities Montana is a nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities and provides Montana communities with opportunities to explore the culture and history of Montana.

ImagineIF is also offering a Civic Literacy Resource Guide that will offer information about the Civic Literacy Challenge and classes, as well as include links to materials to help support participants. The guide can be accessed at: imagineiflibraries.libguides.com/civics.

Lune Axelsen
laxelsen@imagineiflibraries.org
Marketing and Communications Coordinator
imagineif LIBRARIES
MLA Migrates to Wild Apricot Membership Software

As most of you know, MLA has migrated to web-based software to manage our membership database and other functions. The decision to migrate to Wild Apricot was made after the board studied three different management software programs. Wild Apricot best served the needs of MLA with both functionality and cost.

What is Wild Apricot? Wild Apricot is web-based software for small associations and non-profits to help manage their membership database needs, conduct event registrations, send out mass email messages and perform other activities. It is "cloud" based software and does not have to be house on an MLA computer.

As I am still getting familiar with the software, there have been a few glitches to deal with. As time goes by, Wild Apricot will be a very useful tool for MLA. I will be able to send out emails to alert you to coming events, reminders to pay dues and MLA will even be able to publish the newsletter online so it will be readily available to everyone and will be sent right to your email inbox. MLA will be able to move sections of the MLA website to a "Members Only" section that will be most helpful to those members who wish to interact with other MLA members while keeping contact information confidential. Members will be able to go into their account and select what information they want to make available to other members even if they are not the same settings that MLA has set up. For those of you who are current paid members, please go in and explore your account.
At the present time the only functioning section is the JOIN link. I am moving forward with adding the Fall Retreat to the Events section. As soon as more protocols are in place, the directory will be available for members to search. I am working on getting more of the software functionality in place, so please be patient. Soon it will all be working seamlessly!

MLA is considering moving our current website to Wild Apricot. This decision will be made at the Fall Board Meeting on Monday, October 18th. Webmaster, Stephen Haddad and I are making a document with pros and cons for the board to consider. This list will be sent out through WiredMT before the meeting and the board would love MLA member feedback before a decision is made.

Thank you again for your patience as I work through moving MLA to this platform.

Debbi Kramer, Executive Director
debkmla@hotmail.com
Montana Library Association, Inc.

Montana Libraries Provided Essential Assistance for the Decennial Census

Montana’s expansive Big Sky landscape is as challenging as it is beautiful. Wide open spaces mean that rural mail delivery was never established for many Montanans, and access to the Internet is equally elusive. These two factors of everyday life under the Big Sky have proven a serious challenge to Montana getting a fair and accurate count in this year’s Census. For 2010, the US Census was depending largely on self-reporting, with a lot fewer door-to-door enumerators planning to be hired. These were all issues that Montana’s Complete Count committees planned for. There were plans in place for events all across the state starting last April and into the summer to improve our every-ten-year count in hopes that Montana would earn back a second seat in the US House of Representatives and that representation in our state legislature over the next decade would be fair. The Decennial Census is also used to allot federal funds for infrastructure, education, and healthcare, so a complete count assures that Montana gets its fair share of federal funds.

Then, COVID-19 happened.

Libraries and schools closed, conferences, rodeos, fairs and festivals were canceled. A plan to have 100 public health nursing students presenting programs at libraries last April never happened. Hiring of census workers was delayed.

Still, librarians stepped up. More than 50 libraries signed on to be “Census Champions” and many librarians served on their local Complete Count Committees to help figure out ways to increase the self-reporting. Our Census Champs have been meeting for months, sharing ideas, pushing out information about self-reporting on social media, supporting communities by using their mobile hotspots and computers in the library to slowly, steadily, get Montana’s self-report stats inching up. Libraries have helped in recruiting census workers, too, bringing needed employment opportunities to many in their community.

CBS news noticed, when they sent a reporter to Baker, MT to the Fallon County Library to record a citizen completing his form online with the help of the library director, Stacy Moore. This is everyday stuff for Montana’s public libraries: helping out a citizen with accessing information and services online.
Libraries across the state still pulled off a push week to try to get our self-reporting for the US Census up, just 5 months later than originally planned. September 21-26 was designated as "It's Not Too Late To Be Counted...at the Library" week and more than 50 libraries across the Treasure State offered incentives, made a big push on social media, featured virtual programs like this one: [https://vimeo.com/405220503](https://vimeo.com/405220503), a census trivia game prepared by the Belgrade Community Library, and census-themed story times featuring counting books and information for parents promoting a complete count. The Montana State Library created a [dashboard about these events](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/montana-libraries-help-citizens-fill-out-census-forms-as-state-hopes-for-another-congress-seat/) and supported libraries with a [census-in-the-library resources](https://vimeo.com/405220503) web page. As libraries served patrons by helping them with self-reporting, each library helping to collect a few dozen or a few hundred responses to the census online survey, the federal share of dollars fairly coming to Montana increased by $2,000 per year, per person – adding in hundreds of thousands of fair dollars in federally-funded services, programs and jobs to Montana’s economy over the next decade. And, maybe, just maybe, doubling the number of representatives from Montana in the House of Representatives.

Jo Flick
[JFlick@mt.gov](mailto:JFlick@mt.gov)
Montana State Library
Check out a few sneak peek photos of the new library building under construction in Missoula! Despite construction, we are moved in and offering limited curbside service to our patrons. It's been a challenge but really exciting. Hope to see you all come visit when our doors finally open.

Elizabeth C. Jonkel
ejonkel@missoula.lib.mt.us
Missoula Public Library
Great Falls Library Introduces New Book Case

A bookcase was painted the colors of the Montana flag for our new Montana display. Montana authors or stories of Montana are included. Authors start with David Abrams and end with Kim Zupan. Fiction, non-fiction, memoirs, biographies, and YA are all included.

They are already flying off the shelves! Hopefully we will have a never ending supply. We have a rich literary heritage in Montana and we love to introduce our patrons to new adventures in reading.

Debbie Stewart
dstewart@greatfallslibrary.org
Great Falls Public Library
Emerging Scholar Article Contest

ENTER YOUR MANUSCRIPT for a chance to win $300, receive a free trip to the 2021 Montana History Conference, and have your article published in Montana The Magazine of Western History.

Deadline: January 4, 2021

To learn more and submit: mhspublications.submittable.com/submit
Our first ever digital issue—
**African Americans in Montana and the West**—is available online for free!

mhs.mt.gov/pubs/MMWHDigitalIssueSum2020
MLA Fall Retreat 2020: "Librarians in Interesting Times"

When

*Sunday, Oct. 18th, 11am to Monday, Oct. 19th, 1:30pm*

Where

*This is an online event.*

More information

Conference Schedule:

**Sunday Morning:**
11:00-12:00 pm PLD & ASLD division meetings
1:00-2:00 Virtual Conferences: getting the most out of not being there
2:30-3:30 What's new in privacy.
4:00-4:45 Kitty Oliver (Humanities Montana) Diversity in America

**Monday Morning:**
9:00-noon Knowing What We Know Now: Planning for the Next Disaster
12:30-1:30 Accessing the Montana Legislature: Information and Resources

REGISTER

- MARGINALIA -

When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), Amazon donates.

Montana Library Association receives a donation every time you make a purchase on smile.amazon.com with "MLA" as the donation recipient. Set up your automatic donation today and remember to shop with "Smile"!
Submissions Open for the December 2020 Issue!

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

Montana Library FOCUS
[ISSN 1076-352X]

Background image by Dana Hutchinson / CC BY (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0)

The FOCUS is an official publication of the Montana Library Association (MLA), and is published in collaboration with the members which it serves. You can look for new issues six times a year: in February, April, June, August, October, and December. With an online readership of over 500, the newsletter works to reflect, inspire, and give voice to the vibrant communities that exist in and around Montana’s libraries.

The FOCUS welcomes your input! To submit feedback, articles, reviews, inquiries, and ideas—or to place an ad or provide sponsorship—please contact the editorial staff directly:

Star Bradley (Co-Editor)
mlaFOCUSeditor@gmail.com
406-994-6668
mtlib.org/focus

DeHanza Kwong (Co-Editor)
mlaFOCUSeditor@gmail.com
406-723-3361
mtlib.org/focus