

**From the Desk of
Debbi Kramer, Executive Director**

Another membership year has begun for the Montana Library Association. MLA was started in 1906 which makes this membership year our 115th year. It really doesn't seem possible that MLA has been working to educate Montana librarians for that long.

I know that many of you were under the assumption that I was retiring as the end of the 2020 membership year. That was my plan until Covid-19 threw a monkey wrench into my plans. I spoke to the MLA board and together we decided it was in the best interest of MLA for me to spend one more year at the helm and help MLA through this difficult year. With the loss of the revenue from MLA's major revenue stream, annual conference, it was time to look for other revenue in order to continue to operate for another year. MLA has also lost substantial revenue (\$4,000) from our personalized MLA license plates. MLA is pleased to announce that with grants from Humanities Montana CARES Act and a Montana Social Services Non-Profit grant MLA has a small cushion to continue operating. I would like to send a special thank you to outgoing MLA Secretary-Treasurer Megan Stark for writing and securing both grants.

As MLA moves forward through the 2020-21 membership many changes are on the horizon. Two of the changes are quite significant. The first is migrating to a membership software program to replace the membership database and the second is virtual conferences.

The MLA board of directors at its June meeting voted to purchase a membership software package. The software purchased was Wild Apricot. The software will integrate seamlessly into the current MLA website. In fact many of you may not even know the new software is in use. Wild Apricot will enable MLA to manage memberships, manage event registration and contact members with many types of email messages. MLA will even be able to deliver the FOCUS newsletter to your inbox. With the member's only section of the website, members will be able to contact other librarians because information that is now excluded from the MLA website due to privacy concerns will be visible. You will be able to contact your fellow librarians with questions or concerns without posting in Wired. It is our hope that this new membership software will increase membership in MLA with its great features.

I am working vigorously to set up the new software. It is my hope to have the software in place by September 1st. An announcement will be made on WiredMT when the software is ready for use. It is my hope that the integration process will go flawlessly and quickly.

The second significant change in the MLA landscape will be moving to a virtual conference for the Fall Retreat. Fall Retreat was set for October 18-19, 2020 at Chico Hot Springs Resort. Due to complications from the Covid-19 virus and MLA's goal to keep all our members safe, the MLA Executive Board and ASLD and PLD division chairs made the difficult decision to move to a virtual conference for the 2020 Fall Retreat. For those of you who attended the MLA workshops presented in April and May, the format will be very much the same. Workshops will be presented through Zoom meetings and those workshops will be archived for later viewing if you are unable to attend during the retreat timeframe. Fall Retreat workshops will be presented on Sunday afternoon, October 18th and Monday morning, October 19th. Planning and carrying

out a virtual conference will be a new undertaking and I'm sure there will be problems, but the ASLD, PLD division chairs and conference planners will do their best to present a smooth, educational retreat.

The MLA 2020-21 fiscal year budget has been posted on the MLA website.

<http://www.mtlib.org/governance/reports/> Please look over the budget and contact me with any questions or concerns. Also the draft minutes from the June board meeting are posted on the MLA website as well. <http://www.mtlib.org/governance/minutes/>

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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.