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BIG SKY LIBRARIES
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Date Event

Date	Event
May 12-13	American Library Association Legislative Days
June 11	MSL Commission Meeting-Bozeman
July 4	Independence Day
August 13	MSL Commission Meeting-Helena

Legislative Update

By: Karen Strege, State Librarian

The State Library's budget picture for the next two fiscal years has improved during the past two months. Before concluding its hearings, the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Education approved the additional use of $160,000 in coal severance taxes (CST) to help fill the gap left by the reduction in general funds. This increase saved one FTE at the State Library, restored full funding for the license for the periodical database, and restored some funding for library federations. In addition, the Senate Finance and Claims Committee restored the across-the-board 1% cut in general funds approved by the House Appropriations Committee.

The legislature considered many separate bills that would have affected the State Library's budget. Two bills concerned the CST: The Appropriations Committee tabled both HB 177, which would have reduced the CST by half, and HB 593, which would have directed all the CST joint account to coal producing counties. This committee also tabled HB 491, which would have enabled the State Library to apply for grants from the Treasure State Endowment Program for natural resource information projects.

Only one bill directly related to library law was considered by the legislature: The House State Administration Committee tabled this bill, HB 694, which would have changed Library Records Confidentially Law to allow parents to access their children's library records. The Montana Library Commission and the Montana Library Association opposed this bill.

The State Library's budget now stands close to the Governor's executive proposal. Subject to final legislative approval and a final decision by the Commission, the State Library's budget may contain reduced funds for the interlibrary loan reimbursement program and MSL's materials budget, and require that two FTE be eliminated at the State Library.

The legislature is struggling to find a compromise on sources of increased revenues to fill significant holes in all agency budgets. As of today, the legislature is considering increased cigarette taxes, imposing a sales tax, and other sources of funding for diminished state coffers. Until the final gavel falls, state agencies budgets for the next two fiscal years, including the State Library's, remains uncertain.

Look for a summary of library-related legislative action in the next issue of Big Sky Libraries, as well as via Wired-MT.

A Message from the State Librarian

By Karen Strege, State Librarian

Karen Strege, State Librarian

Spring seems to have arrived, at least half of the days here in Helena. In addition, on odd-number years in Montana, spring means the end of the legislative session. As this issue of Big Sky Libraries contains a legislative update, I want to express here my personal thanks to all of you who contacted a legislator on behalf of the State Library's budget. Without this support, our legislative efforts would not succeed. This session has been very challenging for our legislators, who were required to make very difficult choices between valuable programs. Please remember to contact your legislators when they return home to thank them for their support of libraries and taking on a most difficult and sometimes thankless job.

What's on tap for the State Library following legislative adjournment? The Commission will lose three valued members in May. Orienting and training three new commissioners will be a top priority for MSL staff in the next few months. As always, we welcome the opportunity to inform new Commission members about our operations and services.

David Johnson of Billings and Rosie Garvey of Butte were appointed to the Commission by Governor Marc Racicot in 1997. Governor Judy Martz reappointed Rosie and David in 2001. Rosie and David have served the library community as effective commissioners and advocates for improved library services. I will miss their steady counsel and thank them for six years of service.

Ralph Atchley of Malta has taken a job with the Bureau of Land Management in Cheyenne and will resign in May. Ralph has been a commissioner since 2001 and was elected Chair of the Commission last year. To ensure Ralph's continued involvement with state libraries, I notified the State Librarian in Cheyenne that Ralph was in her town.

Please join in saying farewell and thank you to these commissioners at the MSL Commission meeting on April 23 at the Copper King Hotel in Butte, and at the annual Commission reception for MLA members on April 25 at the MLA Convention, also at the Copper King.

Another high priority at MSL is merging the NRIS program and the Library and Information Services Department into the Montana State Digital Library (MSdL). What is currently a concept now will become reality through revised information technology plans, new individual work plans, and operations plans. We are reviewing workspaces, publications, and our Web presence. The merger will be an on-going process for at least the next six months. Rest assured that the same excellent service from both departments will continue under the new organization.

In addition to addressing these priorities, we will review our strategic plan to see if its activities and objectives still meet the needs of the library community. We review the plan with special attention to the budget imperatives that we face and the need to renew our commitment to improving library services in Montana.

It seems somehow appropriate that this review and renewal process is getting underway in spring. I look forward to these changes, and to working with each of you to make them successful.

Commission Report: Farewell to Three Commission Members

The MSL Commission will lose three members in May: David Johnson, Rosie Garvey, and Ralph Atchley. State Librarian Karen Strege said, "I thank each of these commissioners for their strong commitment and dedication to Montana's libraries. I invite the library community to join me in saying farewell and thank you to them at the MSL Commission meeting and at the annual Commission reception for MLA members."

David Johnson of Billings and Rosie Garvey of Butte were appointed to the Commission by Governor Marc Racicot in 1997. Governor Judy Martz reappointed Rosie and David in 2001.

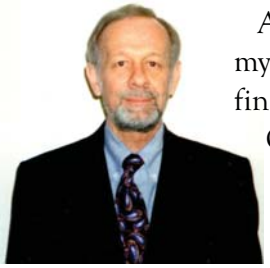
Ralph Atchley of Malta has been a commissioner since 2001 and was elected Chair of the Commission last year. He has taken a job with the Bureau of Land Management in Cheyenne and will resign in May.

Each of the departing commissioners expressed their admiration and appreciation for the work of Montana's library professionals in the following messages:

As I reflect on my last six years as a commissioner, I feel very humble and fortunate for having had the opportunity to be involved in the library world in Montana as a Montana State Library Commissioner. I have gained a great deal of knowledge and respect for all of the libraries, staff, and administration in our great state of Montana.

I have met so many wonderful people involved at the state, local, and school levels that are really the core of the success of the library systems in Montana. I will truly cherish those friendships forever, and thank you for the success of your libraries at all levels. I will continue to support the funding of all libraries. It is my hope for the future that through appropriate legislation and funding, we will be able to continue to offer all of the services and countless opportunities to all of the citizens of Montana that have been offered in the past.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Garvey



As I complete my sixth and final year as a Commission member, I leave with a very warm and positive feeling about the quality of our delivery of library services to the citizens of this great state. Despite the constant battle to achieve fair funding from our governments, virtually all of the library professionals I have met continue to be upbeat and positive.

It has been amazing to me to have discovered the extent to which technology has permeated the library environment. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to be a part of our move into the 21st century. Thanks to all of you, and especially to Karen and her dedicated staff at the Montana State Library.

David Johnson

With a great measure of regret, I must give up my membership on the Montana State Library Commission.

I have accepted a position with the Bureau of Land Management and will be stationed in Cheyenne, Wyoming. I am therefore forced to leave my native state and her people.

I will miss the Montana library community of professionals. You took me into your fold without reservation simply because I like to read. Through your sharing and willingness to lead, I developed a deep respect for you and the services you provide. I am immensely proud of being able to say I know you, the work you do, and the course through issues of funding, filters, and future you have chosen.

I will always feel the public library, as a repository of our people's facts, fiction, fantasy, and heart is a most important instrument in the formulation of a cohesive and well-rounded society. I am depending on you to keep Montana's libraries in the forefront of our communities' focus. I will remember you all.

Thanks,
Ralph Atchley

Lewis and Clark Conference Kicks Off Bicentenial Commemoration

Marks Beginning of Unique Opportunity for Librarians

By Cheryl Heser, Director Rosebud County Library

"Jefferson's West," a four-day conference in Virginia, which culminated in the January commencement ceremonies for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration across America, offered not only wonderful experiences, education, and pageantry, but also the start of a unique opportunity for librarians.

The gathering featured panel discussions by eminent historians such as James Ronda, keynote speaker for the special ceremonies, along with John Logan Allen, Clay Jenkinson, and Gary Moulton. Outstanding authors, including Dayton Duncan, James Alexander Thom, and William Least Heat Moon, were also part of the events.

Approximately 4,000 people gathered on the west lawn at Monticello to listen to the Lewis and Clark Fife and Drum Corps and special speakers for the Commencement Ceremonies. Photo: Cheryl Heser

A highlight of the author panel was the speech by Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs, the daughter of Stephen Ambrose, who was very articulate about experiences along the Lewis and Clark trail with her famous father, as well as her own love of the subject. Her encyclopedia of the Lewis and Clark experience, co-authored with Clay Jenkinson and entitled "The Lewis and Clark Companion," should be a strong addition to library collections on the subject.

Most of the people honored with major roles in the kick-off to the three-and-a-half year observance were authors, either of historical works and editing of the journals, or of fictional works, such as Thom's powerful "Sign Talker," the fictional "biography" of George Drouillard. Each of them has a Jeffersonian reverence for books and libraries, which promises to be a major part of the bicentennial.

It is significant that the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial began at Monticello with most of the programs at the University of Virginia within view of the Rotunda. The Rotunda was Jefferson's university library, which he called the "temple of knowledge." The theme of "Jefferson's West" was the inspiration provided to the concept and accomplishments of the Expedition of the Corps of Discovery from the vision of Jefferson, a dedicated scholar, writer, and lover and collector of books, many of which eventually became the initial collection of the Library of Congress.

Dayton Duncan, noted author and partner of Ken Burns in the production of the landmark PBS video "Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery," commented in his introductory remarks as emcee of the ceremonies that the whole expedition idea did, in fact, begin in a library.

From 'Jefferson's West," the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial will continue with fourteen more signature events designated by the National Council for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. Two of those events will be in Montana in 2005 and 2006.

Meanwhile, Montana librarians have an opportunity to be part of the observance and to benefit from people's interest in the books, on-line resources, and programs available to extend the experience to all American citizens.

The Montana Library Association is one of twelve "trail state" Library Associations which has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Park Service in support of Corps of Discovery II, the traveling educational exhibit which will follow the trail and visit communities throughout the bicentennial.

Continued on page 5 ~ Unique Opportunity

Unique Opportunity ~ continued from page 4

Libraries "on the trail" have the opportunity to participate and promote this unique exhibit, which offers, among other things, a storytelling tent intended to facilitate speaking opportunities to people with many points of view concerning the Expedition. This "Tent of Many Voices" is part of the emphasis on multicultural study and understanding which highlights the observance. Libraries which have encouraged multiculturalism in recent years have another strong incentive to do so throughout this time.

Finally, leadership is of definite interest to the library community at this time. With the need of communities for opportunities to collaborate and participate in programs and events during the bicentennial years, librarians have a new and promising chance to take leadership in bringing Lewis and Clark experiences and knowledge to the people in their areas.

On a personal note, when I returned to work at Rosebud County Library in Forsyth after enjoying my time at "Jefferson's West," I taught history classes at several high schools in our county. Since then, we have had a definite increase in circulation of Lewis and Clark materials and on-line searching on the subject, mostly by high school students.

When exposed to what libraries have to offer on the subject, patrons find there is "something for everyone." Montana librarians with imagination, interest, and Jeffersonian love of books and libraries need to grasp this wonderful opportunity to make libraries a significant part of every Montanan's experience of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial years.

NRIS Develops New Water Info Web Applications

Related Poster Wins First Place at GIS Conference

The Montana Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) is a summary of climate data developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), designed for areas that rely on snow melt as the primary source of surface water. This index accounts for snowpack, mountain precipitation, streamflow, reservoir storage, and soil moisture conditions. The SWSI has been available in Montana from the NRCS since 1990 and is used to evaluate current and seasonal surface water supplies. It is typically used by irrigators, fisheries personnel, recreationists, and others who utilize surface waters.

In 1992, the NRCS, in partnership with the Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS), developed a format for mapping Montana SWSI data and displaying the maps on the Web. Over the years, the composition of SWSI maps has varied. Changes in the legend, number of basins, and style have made comparison between years difficult. Also, the Web application allowed only one year of data to be viewed at a time. All that has changed with the introduction of a new web application from NRIS that has standardized over 80 SWSI maps and that will make this data more readily available on the Web.

NRIS programmer TJ Abbenhaus used a combination of Visual Basic Script and Map Objects to create the new SWSI application. "With our new SWSI Web application, the GIS, (mapping) component has been built into the web application. The web application displays maps and allows users to search for and compare current and historic SWSI information," TJ said. He added, "NRIS thanks our NRCS partners, particularly Roy Kaiser, NRCS Water Supply Specialist, for their vital contributions to this project."

Enhancements planned for the near future include the ability to create and print PDF versions of the maps from the site directly, as well as the addition of animations showing changes to the data over a period of months or years. To view the site, visit http://nris.state.mt.us/wis/SWSInteractive/.

On a related note, TJ and NRIS Water Information System Manager Catherine Love entered a poster representing this work into a poster contest at the Intermountain GIS Users Conference in Coeur D'Alene earlier this month. Their poster won the contest and they were awarded a $100 gift certificate. Congratulations Catherine and TJ!

MSL Offers New Bibliographies

By John Heldt, MSL

Three new subject-oriented bibliographies, created by Government Information Services Specialist John Heldt, are now available through the State Library. The annotated four-page compilations cover Montana agriculture, wildlife, and business and include a large number of state-focused Web sites and selected monographs, periodicals, databases, and government documents available at MSL.

Print copies of the bibliographies are available at the State Library and will be distributed at the MLA conference in Butte. PDF and Microsoft Word versions can be accessed and downloaded by going to the Library and Information Services Department home page at: msl.state.mt.us/lisd.

More bibliographies, covering other topics of interest to State Library patrons, will be released later in the year. For more information, e-mail John at jheldt@state.mt.us or call him at (406) 444-9815.

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