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Mountain Plains Library Association Report - October 27, 2003
Submitted by Ken Kempcke, MPLA Representative

Radio and TV Ads Promote Montana Libraries

As part of the American Library Association's "Need It? Find It @ Your Library" Campaign, the Montana Library Association began running radio and television commercials encouraging support for Montana Libraries. The advertisements feature authors Wylie Gustafson, Thomas McGuane and Stephanie Ambrose Tubbs. The Montana State Library and the Institute of Museum and Library Services also contributed to the campaign.

ASLD/PLD Joint Retreat

Once again the Academic & Special Libraries Division joined forces with the Public Libraries Division to present their annual retreat at Chico Hot Springs in Prey, Montana. This year the retreat took place October 19 and 20. Details are posted on the divisional and Wired lists and on the MLA website (<http://www.mtlib.org>).

2004 MLA Conference

The MLA 2004 conference will be held April 24-27, 2004 (Sat-Tues) in Bozeman. Our theme is "It's a Matter of Speech." Information about the Conference is on the MLA Web site (<http://www.mtlib.org/conf/conf2004.html>). First on the list of programs is our keynote speaker, Greg Mortenson, co-founder and Executive Director of the Central Asia Institute, a nonprofit organization that promotes literacy, women's vocational skills, and awareness of public health and environmental issues through community-initiated education programs in mountain regions of Central Asia. No one understands the power of the books and education more than Greg Mortenson, who was in Pakistan, near the Afghanistan border, on 9/11/2001. In fact, Mortenson was the last American and one of only a handful of foreigners to remain in northern Pakistan after 9/11; he stayed on to continue his education programs. Greg dedicates his lifework to educating children, especially girls, in the mountainous regions of Central Asia because he sees the education of girls as the single-most long-term tool against terrorism, poverty and inequity.

To learn more about Greg Mortenson and the Central Asia Institute, visit the institute's website: <http://www.ikat.org>. Follow the Media link to find the Parade Magazine cover story about Mortenson (4/6/03), "What We Can Learn From a Man Who Fights Terrorism and Builds Nations One School At a Time."

Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Events

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed committing MLA and other library associations from "trail states" across the nation to support the National Park Service educational project "Corps of Discovery II". This traveling exhibit, which will be on display in communities across the United States, includes both Expedition materials, materials for local activities, and the "Tent of Many Voices" for storytelling and sharing of all aspects of the Lewis & Clark story.

For other Montana library Lewis and Clark events see: <http://www.mtlib.org/prmaterials/lctf/projects.html>.

Lewis and Clark Commission offers Bicentennial Project Grants

Qualified non-profit organizations that are putting their hearts, hard work, and dedication into projects related to the state's commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Corps of Discovery can now apply for grants from the Montana Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission to help pay for them. "We have many wonderful events and projects underway statewide," Commission Executive Director Clint Blackwood said. "A primary goal of the commission is to coordinate and support those efforts. This grant program is one of the ways in which we do that." The grants, which are being offered for the fifth straight year, will range from \$5,000 to \$25,000, and interested

organizations have until Dec. 19, 2003, to apply. The total amount available for the grant program this year will be determined Feb. 10, 2004, at the meeting of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission. The grants are a combined effort of the commission and the Montana Department of Commerce's Travel Montana Program. Under the same program last year requests totaling \$825,492 were received and 10 projects totaling \$89,950 were funded. "There are still many quality projects out there that we have not been able to fund over the past four years. We are always looking for local and statewide sponsors to join our team, so please contact us if you or your business is interested in getting involved," Blackwood said.

Additionally, the National Park Service is accepting applications for their 2004 Challenge Cost Shares grant program. The maximum amount for each project is \$250,000, and applications must be submitted through their website, <http://www.nps.gov/lecl> no later than Jan. 15, 2004. Grant information and application forms for both programs are available on the commission's website, <http://www.montanalewisandclark.org/funding>, by calling 406-443-2109, or writing Montana Lewis and Clark Commission, PO Box 201203, Helena MT 59620-1203.

Offline Conference 2004

The next MLA "Offline" Technology conference will be held in Glasgow, MT, February 12-13. For more details on the conference, see: <http://www.mtlib.org/offline/offlinemain.html>.

Bozeman Public Library Receives National Award

The Bozeman Public Library does a lot more than lend out books -- so much more that it has just won a \$10,000 national award for its outstanding service to its community. Only three libraries in the nation will receive this year's National Award for Library Service from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services in Washington, D.C.

"We're thrilled, absolutely thrilled," Alice Meister, library director, said Monday. What's unique about the Bozeman library, Meister said, is that it tries to go "above and beyond" as a partner with community groups, in offering educational programs and assisting adults and children.

In announcing the award, Robert Martin, institute director, cited the Bozeman Library for its free classes on how to use computers and the Internet, its grants center, its kids book discussion groups, and its sponsorship of Martin Luther King Day celebrations. "The staff and volunteers have made the Library an active, living part of the community," Martin wrote.

The Bozeman Library serves two-thirds of the people of Gallatin County, Meister said. Last year, it checked out 479,077 books, books-on-tape, CDs, magazines and other materials, or about 10 items for every resident in the area. Bozeman's library shines in being "a center for the social, intellectual and practical life" of the area, wrote Mary Bushing, a Montana State University librarian, and James Allard, a philosophy professor, in supporting the award application.

The library has worked with the Montana Center for International Visitors to sponsor evening programs on the fabrics of Bangladesh and ecotourism in Mongolia, co-sponsored Chrysti the Wordsmith's cafe programs on word origins, helped collect books for Africa and held a poetry night where anyone could read a favorite poem.

It has sponsored talks on civil liberties, dinosaurs and, after Sept. 11, "What is Islam." KEMC public radio has set up a small studio in the library, which has allowed live broadcasts on such topics as censorship. The library also has a Special Delivery program for homebound or blind patrons.

Children have come in to read to dogs as one of many popular programs for kids, arranged by children's librarians whose "enthusiasm is contagious," Bushing and Allard wrote. "When the staff entertains bystanders at the annual Sweet Pea Festival parade with their precision book cart drill team, thousands cheer them because they are part of the community."

Author Alan Kesselheim wrote that the library has enriched the community and is dedicated to "service and democratic ideals." Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., nominated the library for the award. Meister said the \$10,000 will likely go toward the building fund for the new library building, a \$14 million project. When asked to support a \$4 million bond issue for the new library, voters said yes by a two-to-one margin. In addition, Meister said, Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Mont., has gotten Congress to appropriate \$178,000 for site development, and is hoping to secure another \$350,000.