Montana State Digital Library
July 15, 2005 – September 15, 2005

Natural Resource Information System (NRIS)

Goal 1: To fulfill its mandate to be the source for natural resource information in Montana, NRIS acquires, integrates, maintains, and documents natural resource data and information needed for understanding, managing and utilizing Montana's natural resources, and environment.

- Developed new Point Observation Database to replace Bird Distribution Database with a more geographically precise and information-rich archive for statewide bird distribution data. 5086 new records have been entered into this database, of which 2947 will be uploaded into Biotics as breeding Occurrences for 22 birds species.

- NHP biologists conducted field survey work to address partner data needs/gaps for bats, amphibians, wetland and riparian vegetation communities, and numerous plant species of concern. Two new populations of Spalding's catchfly, a plant listed as Threatened, were discovered using predictive habitat modeling.

- NHP Ecologists collected data to develop improved land cover (vegetation) mapping, focusing on two pilot areas – the Rocky Mountain Front and Centennial Valley.

- Completed and posted a report documenting the Aquatic Ecosystems of Montana's Missouri River Watershed. This project also resulted in an extensive aquatic ecosystem database documenting 100,000 fish and macro-invertebrates sampled from 1150 stream sites.

- Completed and posted a report on the Range-wide Status Assessment of water howellia for the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and a technical report documenting biotic integrity assessment methods for streams and wetlands in western Montana, for MT-DEQ.

- Completed and posted reports on Bat Use of Highway Bridges in South-Central Montana (for MDT) and on Pygmy Rabbit Distribution in Beaverhead and Madison Counties, for the Bureau of Land Management.

- Posted the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) at the 1:24k scale. This high-priority dataset is not yet complete for Montana. As the NHD steward, NRIS will host the data, mediate future updates and provide training for natural resource professionals on making changes to the NHD.

Goal 2: A broad range of user groups can easily locate data in effective formats. Users find this information augmented with related datasets to increase its value. Potential NRIS users are well informed of information available through the clearinghouse and trained in the use of NRIS tools. Staff assistance is available when needed to assist users in locating and utilizing data.

Services:

- Species of Concern search application was added to the NHP web resources; generates lists of Species of Concern by county, watershed or township, as well as by status designation or rank.

- Provided full-text web access to over 50 NHP reports on animal surveys (competed prior to 2000) in pdf format.

Outreach:

- Participated in a panel presentation for the Montana Wetlands Coordinating Council Water Monitoring Group to promote the MT Water Quality Tracker, an NRIS resource for metadata about water quality monitoring projects and sites in Montana.

- Served on the Montana Land Information Advisory Council (MLIAC), which effectively replaces the Montana Geographic Information Council. MLIAC is the result of Senate Bill 98, the Montana Land Informaiton Act, which creates funding for GIS activities through recordation fees, and creates the Council to oversee GIS activities in the state and the grant process created by the Act.

- Served on the MLIAC subcommittee for strategic planning. This subcommittee is attempting to describe the greater GIS System in Montana, including federal, state, local, and tribal government, and the private sector, and provide guidance for GIS development in that context.

- Attended the Yellowstone River Corridor Study's Technical Advisory Committee to share expertise in data management.

- Served on the GIS Subcommittee of the State Emergency Response Commission.

- Attended the quarterly meeting of the Advisory Council for Environmental Public Health Tracking in Montana.

- Presented an overview of the information available through the MSL GIS clearinghouse at the Western States Water Council's Water Information Managers conference.

Goal 3: In order to fulfill its mandate as described under Issues 1 and 2, NRIS secures adequate and stable funding.

- Renewed a 2003 FGDC CAP Grant to support the implementation of an up-to-date central metadata service at NRIS.

- Assisted the Montanaview Consortium in writing a successful proposal for Montana's full membership in AmericaView. The Consortium is chaired by Dr. Rick Lawrence, a professor at MSU. Its members come from various state, federal and local agencies. This year's grant will create an archive of remotely sensed data at MSL. Future years' grants will include funding for technical support at MSL.

- Met with the NRIS Advisory Committee, including representatives of federal agencies that partner with the NHP, to review progress of the NHP "futures" assessment and core contract Statement of Work. Preliminarily identified University of Montana as best option for potential transfer of the NHP contract, and obtained support of committee for establishment of an NHP Partners' Coordinating Committee as a forum to facilitate partner input and collaboration.

Library Information Services

LIS Goal 1: State employees have the information that they need to make good public policy recommendations and decisions.

Objects ingested into the State Publications Digital Repository have risen to 707 as of September 26. In the last two months we have more than doubled our holdings (up from 339 items as of 7/15/05). We have not been advertising this cataloging and preserving of digital publications to state employees but access to them through our catalog has increased.

There remain many issues with how state agencies are publishing this information which may have to be resolved through an accepted set of publication standards or possibly through Administrative Rule developed as an offshoot of the legislation mentioned below in LIS Goal 3. For example, harvesting anything that includes a link that goes off the primary domain is not allowed with this software. Harvesting to date is still concentrated on a few cooperating programs. Although initial discussions have occurred regarding incorporating the geospatial content managed by NRIS into the catalog and repository, we have not as yet determined how to best do this. Integrating the map focus inherent in all operations surrounding NRIS into the information and services of the digital library is, and will be, a long-term constantly moving target. One only has to notice the increasing popularity of GIS in the development community (i.e., Google's http://earth.google.com/ and http://maps.google.com/ and Microsoft's http://virtualearth.msn.com/ and the hacks created by independent programmers (http://mappinghacks.com/) to realize that the expectations of a sophisticated map-using public will grow.

In the spirit of partnership and on the subject of maps, LIS and the Montana Historical Society have teamed up to fund online access to the historically relevant Sanborn Maps (http://sanborn.umi.com/) to our state patrons. This is a subscription only database available to Montana Libraries with a log-in and password. Previously the MHS had a working agreement with the Missoula Preservation Office who is no longer able to carry the funding for this resource.

We are in the process of re-evaluating our database offerings. Specifically, Reference USA has warned us of an increase in their fees for the new fiscal year and we are evaluating other business reference options. In addition, new metrics are being explored by our new Outreach and Access Librarian, Julie Klauss (see personnel below) who became our latest staff member on September 12. In the process of becoming better informed about some of the resources available to State Agency employees and participating library consortia members and patrons, Julie is combining and adding information as well as updating user names and passwords, and is organizing usage statistics of the subscribed databases. The baselines and justifications for those metrics will be available at the next commission meeting. (Please see Success Metrics for the Montana State Library created on 9/26/05 and delivered to the Commission during the June 2005 meeting). Julie has suggested we explore and share subscribed database findings with the other State Libraries within the Mountain Plains Library Association (MPLA) and the Pacific Northwest Library Association (PNLA). The actions could encourage the development of a stronger network with the MPLA and PNLA state agencies and the results may assist our librarians in learning more about the successes and failures of the subscribed databases.

LIS Goal 2: The staff of Montana libraries know about and have access to the professional literature that they need. They obtain assistance from the MSL reference staff for patron questions.

The staff of Montana Libraries has been well served by the Library Development Division. There have been no changes or additions to the professional literature held by LIS and purchased for professional librarians during last fiscal year. A list of those titles was included in the last publication of the Big Sky Newsletter and will be presented again at the MSL 2005 Library Fall Workshop Sept 30. Posts to wired-mt.librarians will be used to remind librarians of the availability of these materials during the coming months.

It should be noted that increasingly the staff of Montana libraries are turning to listservs like wired-mt.librarians, blogs and online resources to obtain answers to questions rather than fielding those reference questions to the MSL staff. This LIS Goal should probably be modified as it coincides with the end of the MSL five-year strategic plan that initiated it in 2000. On the other hand, we still get many questions from state agency employees, questions redirected from the ITSD Help Desk when they arrive through DiscoverMontana.com, and questions from the general public who contact the state library for government specific or historical information.

LIS Goal 3: Montana citizens have easy access to a comprehensive collection of state publications.

Jim Kammerer and Tori Orr are continuing work on the issues raised by the Permanent Public Access Committee. To remind the Commission of the work to date, the staff of LIS have researched the intricate permutations of defining a "state publication" for what was once HB163. Time was spent conducting research to find precedent set outside Montana, opinions were shared and meetings were attended. This definition impacts significant portions of the MSL "Collection Development Policy". It also impacts the "Management Memorandum" to state agencies redefining depository requirements. Jim Kammerer has created a wiki to aid the many parties involved in participating with this language. It can be found at: http://statepublications.jot.com/WikiHome. Although, for learning and testing purposes, this is hosted on a public service site, we will eventually bring it under the jurisdiction of MSL. In the meantime we are currently preparing to reopen the discussion with the rest of the Committee as soon as scheduling allows in preparation for the 2007 legislative session.

LIS Goal 4: Users have easy and comprehensive access to information through the library.

Although we have redesigned the interface to our Public Access Computers to allow more obvious catalog access, to NRIS services and to the Montana Library Network, work remains on the redesign of this program's portions of the State Library's website. This redesign is critical to the Goal 4, but at present the effort it requires cannot be resolved with current LIS staff skills. Borrowing from other divisions with current workloads is not possible. We continue to interview applicants for the Library Systems Specialist position and have realized the need to compromise on the skill requirements for this geographic area and pay scale. Implementing sophisticated online access to library materials will be impossible without the technical expertise of a dedicated programmer. We do not intend on giving up the search but continue to search for a programmer enthusiastic about library services or who is willing to learn about, advocate for, and place first in line *the library patron's* online user experience.

We have attended the meetings and supported continuing efforts proposed by MLN to find an authentication system through which all our database access can pass with one password. The State (ITSD) is working on it's own "one pass" system called an "E Pass" which does not sound promising for our use because the service would likely violate personal privacy issues that surround public access to information. We also continue to work with MLN on more appropriate access and visibility to our state and federal materials through the MLNCat.

Accomplishments that are not covered by the stated LIS goals but deserve mention since they impact staff time and hours and they directly improve our service quality and our outreach, interlibrary cooperation and community recognition include:

1. LIS staff disassembled the old computer lab of 12 computer workstations and consolidated them for donation to the University of Montana at Helena (formerly the Helena College of Technology). We continue to surplus equipment and furniture that has been stored in the library temporarily while the shuffling of work environments continues. LIS staff unpacked and set up a new set of lab computers, installed identical system images and ensured they were all in working order for the inaugural lab class scheduled for use at the end of September by the State Law Library.

2. Dissemination and distribution of State Documents: Jim Kammerer and Roberta Gebhardt are working on revamping the database they use for State Publications. They are asking for input from the depository libraries regarding what changes they want to see on the monthly shipping list. This dovetails with a class project for Roberta for a Database Modeling course she is taking this term as she continues her MLS quest.

3. Roberta is also increasing visibility and authority of MSL by presenting at the 2005 Fall Workshop for Montana Librarians. Along with Jennie Burroughs from UM and Suzanne Reymer they are presenting two sessions on new technology: blogs, RSS and aggregators.

4. In September Marjorie attended the annual Northwest Interlibrary Loan & Resource Sharing Conference in Portland, Oregon because of her responsibilities as the primary librarian responsible for all of our interlibrary loan requests. Because of our dedication to desk-top service, ILL is fast becoming an essential function of this library. She returned with information on "The Changing Face of ILL: Implications of Summit and Patron-Initiated Requesting". This is a new cost-effective alternative in ILL which LIS may start utilizing as soon as staff training can be arranged with Tracey Cook on advanced ILL functions through FirstSearch.

5. Jim Kammerer and Marjorie continue to evangelize MSL services to new state employees at their orientation classes every other month until Julie Klauss can assume these new duties. LIS has been involved in creating a new list of signage required to replace that library signage that was removed when the stacks were rearranged and to identify the changed division positions.

6. Staff helped compile a physical materials valuation binder for the State Librarian to use for insurance purposes.

Personnel Notes:

The search continues to fill open staff positions. We have invited our top candidate for the GIS Programmer/Analyst position to come to Montana for a final interview. She is well qualified in GIS, particularly in the development of interactive mapping applications for the Web.

We have offered the Web Systems Manager position to a well-qualified local candidate. We expect his answer by October third.

Our new Outreach and Access Librarian, Julie Klauss, just moved to Montana from Colorado. Julie has held positions at the National Indian Law Library, as a Library Technician at a Denver public elementary school, and for the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado. She has had experience providing public relations and marketing support; provided research support in the collection of name authority and legal documents for Native American tribes; managed a school library collection of 12,000 volumes including collection development and interlibrary loans; created web pages for on-line access to library resources and solicited, digitized and organized news photographs and articles for a monthly newsletter and assisted and instructed students and faculty with their research needs. Her skills will compliment those of other staff and will serve to enhance the visibility of the state library.