

Montana Library Network
June – July 2005
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LDD Goal 2: To ensure that all Montana citizens have access to quality library services.

1. The Networking Task Force (NTF) met June 6, 2005, at the Lewis & Clark Library. Highlights of our discussion included:

- Awarding the statewide full-text periodical index to Thomson-Gale, Representatives from Thomson-Gale
- A presentation on Northwest Digital Archives' planning, Jodi Allison-Bunnell
- A report on thin-computing in Montana libraries, Kathy Mora (see below)
- A lengthy discussion of interlibrary loans (ILL) reimbursement models

The following summarizes the consensus recommendations of the NTF, to Darlene, regarding ILL reimbursement:

- The whole idea is to get materials in patrons' hands.
- ILL is a critical, if grossly under funded, part of good library service. We don't have enough money to make any Montana library happy.
- We need a transition strategy to make it possible for all Montana libraries to play between now and when we are able to adequately fund this process.
- We need to become more savvy marketers of resource sharing activities.
- Libraries are part of a changing world. ILL is a tool based on a decades-old model, and is no longer the exclusive current paradigm. We need to create strategies responsive to current realities.
- We'd value the opportunity to discuss ILL with the Commission

2. The first round of selecting new Montana Shared Catalog (MSC) libraries is complete. Acting for the Networking Task Force, Bonnie Williamson, Lyn McKinney, and Mary Ann Hanson reviewed five applications and recommended that each be awarded the financial assistance. As of this writing, the exact value of this award is yet to be determined, but it will be in the neighborhood of \$35,000. This leaves a project unexpended budgeted balance of approximately \$75,000. The five new MSC libraries are:

- Rosebud County Library (includes Colstrip branch)
- Pablo Elementary (Ronan School District)
- Mineral County Public Library
- Sheridan Public Library
- Plains School Library

We were surprised by the number of interested libraries who expressed initial interest but did not apply for financial assistance. We think that the fault lay with inadequate lead times, and our not making ourselves more available to answer libraries' questions about this admittedly big step. We have elected to initiate a second round of MSC-startup financial assistance programs. Beginning September 1, new library applications will be available on the MLN website <http://montanalibraries.org>. Start up assistance is available to libraries, based on the following:

- Program One: Larger Library: 100,000 or more bibliographic records, and 25,000 or more service area population (or over 15,000 full-time-equivalent students, staff, and faculty). Maximum request amount \$50,000
- Program Two: Middle-size library: 35,000 to 100,000 bibliographic records and 10,000 to 24,999 service area population (or 5,000 to 14,999 full-time-equivalent students, staff, and faculty) Maximum request amount \$25,000
- Program Three: Smaller Library: Not a larger or middle-sized library. Maximum request amount \$10,000

The deadline for this second round of new-MSC library applications will be, we anticipate, in late December. We will be traveling to interested libraries, this fall, to do a better job answering libraries' questions. So far we have received queries from twelve libraries, exclusive of the five admitted in the first round.

LDD Goal 5: Montana citizens can easily access the holdings of all Montana and OCLC libraries and online electronic resources through their libraries.

1. OCLC enrollment has proceeded about as normal, and Montana's OCLC membership should increase about five percent this year. (OCLC is a worldwide library cooperative, boasting 54,000 member libraries in 97 countries).

We have 229 libraries signed up for next year (as of July 26, 2005); last year we had 224. There are 19 school libraries that were OCLC libraries in FY05, who have yet to sign up in FY06. I expect most or all of these libraries to sign up in September and October, bringing in another \$7,000 (or fraction thereof) in revenue. We have added 13 new libraries this year, who have contributed just short of \$6,000 in revenues. I anticipate by Christmas we will have about 250 OCLC libraries, a growth of about a dozen or 5% (largely smaller school libraries) from last year.

The total due in FY06 OCLC for all services (cataloging, interlibrary loan, WorldCat access, MLNCAT group catalog, Z39.50 access, BCR surcharge) is \$469,140. I anticipate we will meet this obligation approximately \$412,000 from member libraries, and the balance from Montana State Library managed, federal Library Service Technology Act funds. (WorldCat is OCLC's catalog of materials owned by members, currently totaling 58 million items and over a billion holdings. MLNCAT is the Montana slice of WorldCat, representing the holdings of about 250 Montana libraries. Z39.50 is an online protocol that allows computer systems to exchange information about library items.)

LDD Goal 3: Montana citizens will understand, value, and use the services of Montana's libraries.

1. The Request for Proposal for the statewide auto repair content contract was written and released. Responses are due August 1, 2005. Both Gale and EBSCO now offer this product, we intend to select one or the other by September 2005.

We are seeking a contractor to provide online automobile repair resource, intended to aid shade-tree mechanics repair and maintain their cars and pickups. This is a statewide contract, with the service to be made available to users from within libraries and from their homes.

Libraries must subscribe to the Montana State Library's Montana Full-Text Magazine Database service to qualify for use of these services.

2. Gale/InfoTrac enrollment is coming along, with the deadline for FY06-07 enrollment being the end of September. 147 libraries have signed up to date; 399 currently are enrolled.

LDD Goal 6: Montana citizens and students will have dependable access to electronic information services at their libraries by the end of 2007.

We have written a thin-computer Request for Information (RFI) and sent it to two qualified vendors. (See thin-computer definition below). Responses are due by August 19, 2005. The Montana State Library (MSL) wishes to identify and evaluate thin-computer public access solutions for Montana libraries. Typically these are integrated solutions featuring a Linux or Windows server, a collection of library-specific and general office productivity applications, a number of terminal-based workstations, and support.

- We are only interested in evaluating integrated solutions which combine hardware, applications, and support.
- We are not interested in reviewing servers, terminals, applications, and support separately.
- We are solely interested in solutions featuring terminal-based workstations, not dumbed-down personal computer-based workstations

The Flathead County Library and Great Falls Public Library are both experimenting with thin-computers, with marked success, as public access computers.

After identifying competing solutions it is our intent to evaluate each solution and provide Montana libraries with a written comparative evaluation of identified integrated library thin-computer solutions, including pricing. We may elect to issue a request for proposal, based on what we learn from this RFI, for the purposes of establishing a term contract for an integrated library thin-computing public workstation solution.

What is thin-computing? Thin computers feature workstations that can be either a personal computer, 'dumbed-down' and turned into a terminal by applications and hardware, or a simple computer terminal. For the purposes of our RFI, we are only interested in thin-computer workstations that are terminals.

Applications and data typically reside on host servers. Hosts often serve multiple workstations. Thin-computing workstations typically have no disc or disk drives. Thin-computers are usually connected to their host server via a standard local area network.

Advantages touted for thin computers (over personal computer workstations) include: lower initial and ongoing cost, easier maintenance, far greater security and freedom from viruses, and integrated 'librarian hands-free' turn-key public computing. As promising as thin-computer workstations seem for public access workstations, they are not recommended to be used as staff workstations.