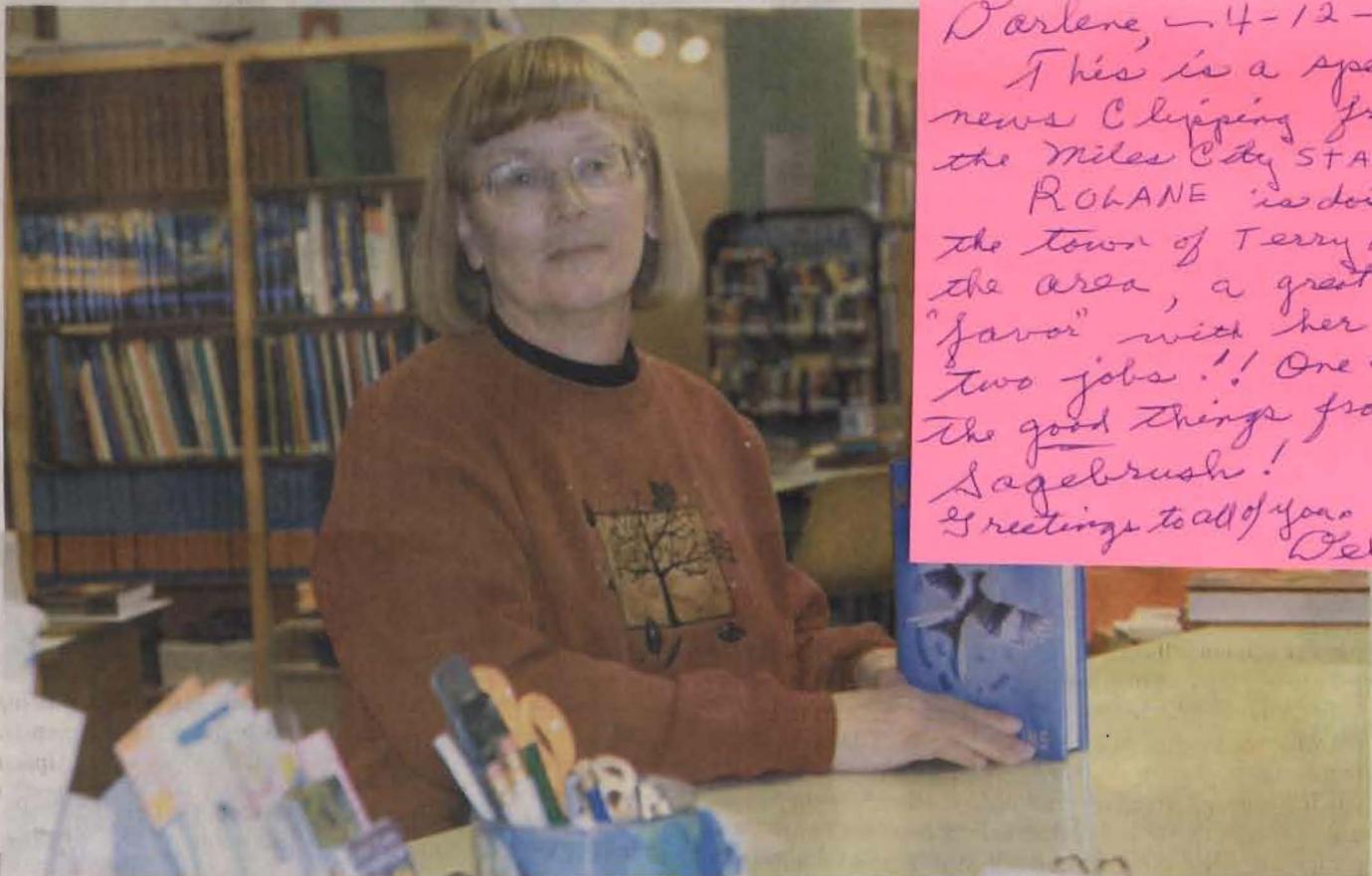


Small-town librarian loves her job



Darlene, 4-12-11
This is a special
news clipping from
the Miles City STAR.
ROLANE is doing
the town of Terry and
the area, a great
"favor" with her
two jobs!! One of
the good things from
Sagebrush!
Greetings to all of you
Delores

Prairie County Library Director Rolane Christofferson is pictured in the library holding a book on which she just finished placing protective covering. As director of a small-town library, Christofferson does everything from covering books to showing new users how to use the facility's computers, even delivering volumes for home-bound patrons.

■ Story and photos by Kay Braddock Montana Best Times

TERRY — For the Prairie County Library Director, the definition of a small-town librarian includes knowing how to do a little of just about everything.

From processing books, to ordering and covering them, to helping library patrons find books and showing new users how to work with computers, Rolane Christofferson said her work at the library here is anything but dull.

"I'm always busy," Christofferson, 53, said. "That's what I like. There's always something to do."

In larger libraries, much of the day-to-day duties like sorting, collecting and shelving books are delegated to others.

"Here I do all of those things, plus the maintenance and cleaning," the 24-year librarian veteran smiled.

A volunteer, who comes in once a week for about three hours also helps process books, while a library aide heads up the library's programming, which includes a weekly children's story hour, along with a scrapbooking class and a book club that meets once a month.

Open about 15 hours each week to Prairie County's 1,200 residents — which includes about 600 in Terry — along with travelers passing through, the county library offers patrons high-speed Internet access on its four desktop and two laptop computers as well as free fax and copy services. A selection of movies and

audio books is also available.

An average of 90 people visit the library weekly, checking out about 200 items.

"What's really amazing is that we have that many people come in a week," Christofferson said, noting that age groups range from 1-year-olds attending the Books and Babies program to patrons in their 90s.

About a dozen avid readers faithfully visit the library each week, while others, like the elderly, rely on home deliveries of their requested books, which Christofferson takes it upon herself to do.

Knowing your patrons

Although the library operates under the traditional card catalog system, with drawer-lined cabinets filled with index cards identifying each book, regular patrons know where to go when searching for a book title.

"Usually they ask me because I know where everything is," Christofferson said. She added, laughing, "You just get that familiar with your collection."

The library's offerings range from inspirational to westerns, science fiction, suspense and mysteries.

Christofferson said knowing those who visit the library helps in selecting books to order.

"I'm thinking about my patrons," Christofferson said. "You get

to know about exactly what they want to read.”

Thanks to a statewide interlibrary resource-sharing program, patrons can still access books not on the shelves. Users simply request the book title from the library director, who then borrows it from a participating library.

“There’s a little bit of everything,” Christofferson said of the library’s collection. “And the best thing is that if I don’t have it, I can get it.”

Currently, the Prairie County Library is looking to update its index system. Although the card catalog system will remain in place, the library is waiting for approval of a \$10,000 grant from the state library commission to implement an automated system



The library, pictured above, is a popular after-school stopping point for students, such as these teens from Terry High School, top right.

that will make finding books and other resources even easier.

With the Montana Shared Catalog, library patrons will use a computer program to search for resources based on titles, authors or subject matter. The program will not only house a listing of the library’s collection, but will also connect with more than 100 libraries statewide, including academic, medical and special libraries.

“It’ll just open up a whole new world,” Christofferson said.

The library will find out in April whether the grant application has been approved.

The library’s collection also contains local historical resources, including books and memoirs written by area residents. Over the years, the collection has proven popular, Christofferson said. Other local historical resources include the library’s collection of Terry High School annuals dating back as far as 1916 and its bound issues of the Terry Tribune newspaper.

The library is working with the county museum on assembling local obituaries, adding copied published obituaries into binders. Christofferson expects that resource to become popular as well.

Combining postal and library work

As library director, Christofferson’s 27-hour workweek is supplemented by her part-time position as a rural mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service. Her morning shifts as a rural mail carrier are generally followed by her afternoon stints at the library.

As a mail carrier, her routes include a 100-mile round trip north of Terry, which is alternated during the week with a 40-mile round trip to county residents west of Terry. She says the morning time spent in her vehicle allows her to enjoy the peaceful elements of the eastern Montana scenery and to take part in a favored activity — listening to audio books.

“I listen to my books, and life is good,” she said. “I’m lucky. I just love my two jobs.”

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Prairie County Library history

■ By Montana Best Times Staff

Following are some high points in the Prairie County Library’s history.

- **April 20, 1920:** The Terry Woman’s Club meets to discuss the possibility of a public library.
- **Dec. 15, 1920:** The Terry Public Library, made possible by donations, opens to the public. The library is housed in a room at the Montana Lumber Company.
- **February 1924:** The Montana Lumber Company building is destroyed by fire. Library books and equipment are saved and moved into the basement of the State Bank.
- **May 9, 1924:** A Terry Band benefit concert nets \$50 for the library. Funds raised are used to purchase a small house for conversion into a permanent library building. The building is moved to donated lots at the corner of Logan Avenue and Park Street.
- **Nov. 1, 1945:** To have a larger library, a schoolhouse on Broadview Bench is purchased and moved to county-owned lots north of the Terry hospital.
- **June 1969:** The first county library board is created. Members are Mrs. Lorraine Ban, Mrs. Hazel Brown, Mrs. Alice Kranzler, Mrs. Jeanette Devlin and Mr. Ray Frank.
- **1984:** A library expansion project doubles the size of the library to 32 feet by 60 feet.
- **1987:** After working three years as library aide, current library director Rolane Christofferson is appointed.