

# Montana State digital Library (MSdL) - Library and Information Services (LIS)

January - April, 2005

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

It is interesting how the wind and weather can actually bring change to a library. In early March, when it was apparent Montana was severely short on its average snowfall and the Drought Advisory Committee was gearing up for the state's seventh season of drought, NRIS was contacted by the Governor's office (specifically the Lt. Governor's Policy Advisor, Will Hammerquist) to provide them an update on how the library, (90-15-305 MCA provides for the state library to operate a Water Information System to provide access to information relating to Montana's water resources) was going to provide timely updates to state government for any drought information needs. Since NRIS has not had the staff to constantly answer the many labor intensive needs of the Drought Advisory Committee nor update the drought information pages on the NRIS website, Jim Hill challenged LIS to provide additional support. Our solution was not merely to update existing links that were dead and add more unstructured information to the existing site, but to customize the digital references to the distinct needs of each constituent.

We approached this problem by dividing the information by user-type. For the Governor it was to craft a public relations response of materials that answered a broad community of needs and reassured citizens that the government was taking this drought issue very seriously. This new site, built in partnership with NRIS programmer Perry Donnafield (who was instrumental in its success), is <http://www.drought.mt.gov> (for a glimpse of the original design before the LIS hand-off to ITSD please see: <http://nris.mt.gov/drought/test/defaultbr.htm> ).

For the Drought Advisory Committee it was to implement a platform that would increase the Committee's visibility, encourage exchange and participation, build alliances and allow for time sensitive materials to be viewed and meetings posted but not retained. Jamie Harmon, the outreach librarian, was responsible for training DAC members to use this new tool with the hope that its users will eventually become self-reliant. The result can now be viewed at <http://montanadrought-gov.bryght.net>.

Finally, we examined the materials remaining on the original Water Resources Site and determined that the project was too big to redesign in the limited time period determined by the Governor (who set a launch date for all materials for the Governor's Cabinet meeting on March 29, 2005). So we took only the most important and manageable pieces. This time with contracted programming support, Jim Kammerer was responsible for reorganizing and updating the state's online drought resources (at <http://nris.state.mt.us/drought/>). It is obvious that this is just the beginning of a larger redesign of all the state's online water-related information which will have to be tackled piece by piece over the coming year.

## **LIS Goal 2: The staff of Montana libraries know about and have access to the professional literature that they need.**

The staff of LIS has been busy replacing and updating the holes in our collection left by the weeding effort of this last year. We have updated the Collection Development Policy and the InterLibrary Loan Policy and they are both attached for your approval and review. In addition we have been watching Senate Joint Resolution 19

(<http://data.opi.state.mt.us/bills/2005/billhtml/SJ0019.htm>) regarding the Patriot Act because it contains language directly related to Montana libraries, specifically on page three there is a request of librarians to,

..."(2) each public library within Montana to post in a prominent place within the library a notice to library users as follows: "WARNING: Under Section 215 of the federal USA PATRIOT Act (Public Law 107-56), records of the books and other material you borrow from this library may be obtained by federal agents. Federal law prohibits librarians from informing you if records about you have been obtained by federal agents. Questions about the law and policy that allows federal agents to obtain and use information about your activities in this library should be directed to: U.S. Attorney General, Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530."

So we have included that paragraph at the bottom of our "Montana State Library Internet Use" placard, and have submitted to Darlene the proposed language for a "Procedures for a government investigation visit to the Montana State Library" which is also attached to this report.

On related employee issues, work continues on finding a Library Systems Specialist to help us develop our own web pages and library-relevant applications. The job has been posted on several new websites and closes for the second time on April 18, 2005 and interviews for this position have been held in conjunction with advertising and interviews scheduled for the NRIS/NHP web applications developer.

Finally, it is all about access--ours and our patrons--and not just to "professional literature" but to each other as well. In order to keep the library contributing in a meaningful and relevant way to state employees and citizens, to open communication between divisions and to advertise what we're doing and what we care about, we have created our own library blog. It is currently hosted outside of the library's servers because in order to develop it we needed programming skills and in exchange for such we became part of the beta launch of a test open source web-based community content management product called Drupal (see: [www.drupal.org](http://www.drupal.org)). Our new community site, which is similar to that developed for the Drought Advisory Committee (if you look closely you can see the same template was used), can be found at <http://msdl-org.bryght.net/>. LIS is currently working on having a redirect of the URL coming from a state address but this approval must traverse its way through ITSD. Until then we have not advertised this site heavily outside of the Montana State Library.

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

At the last Commission meeting we submitted a redraft of the Collection Development Policy. While we were at it we decided to redraft our Interlibrary Loan Policy as well and it is submitted for review along with this report. We will be transitioning from ILLIAD to First Search on April 15 and felt some online guidelines would be helpful since an ILL policy for the MSL had always been an unspoken agreement and never been drafted as library policy.

The LIS statistics presented with this report are worth a comment. They represent a year's overview of library services and represent the statistical outcome of the decisions made during the last fiscal year (Jul-Feb04). The Services used through our website (sessions and document views) indicate a decreasing number of visitors but imply those visitors who do use our services are using them to greater effect—downloading and viewing not just web content but electronic documents as well.

Although number of state employees who have acquired a library card has grown slightly overall, the number of new cards issued in the last year has dropped. This could be due to a decreased emphasis on the physical library in lieu of the digital one. In other words, this is the result of an intentional push to find more virtual users than have those users come into the physical library for their reference needs (since mediated circulation and reference dropped as well). It implies that it is possible to increase physical visits if we wish, but a focus on "library as place" would have to be further nourished with more funds for those items that make libraries a nice place to read and relax.

I mentioned the issues surrounding services purchased through electronic resources in last February's LIS report. Only a combined marketing and usability design approach will resolve the issues users face when they need ready access to electronic databases. They need to know they exist where to find them. They need to answer a specific and promised user base, and they need to have no artificial barriers to access (like layers of permissions and passwords). Without addressing these factors, general use of these databases will remain slim.

It will be nice in the future to more carefully craft those statistics we do gather (which is a time consuming task in itself) to answer specific questions. For instance, although we itemize reference questions that come from state employees based on agency and division, is this necessary to continue and if so, what are we looking to justify or prove and is there a better way to answer that need. Much of this data-gathering is unfocused and therefore of questionable use. But changing it from its present format will present a shock if reports are compared from meeting to meeting. If we are given permission to change it, the start of a new fiscal year would be a good time.

The redesign of the LIS section of the MSL website has still not been implemented. With the absence of a web programmer (with the understanding of .net functionality and the capability to implement sophisticated web solutions) we continue to use and update what we have. However, there is also now discussion between managers whether there is actually a need for a separate and distinct LIS website. Perhaps it would be best now at this juncture to create a truly combined "Montana State Digital Library" website that incorporates the three divisions (NRIS, NHP, and LIS) on a more transparent level. Getting to the point of actually designing a new interface however, has eluded us while the Legislature has been in session.

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.

1. Roberta Gebhart has attended OCLC Connexion training in Missoula. Connexion is OCLC's flagship cataloging service, a powerful, flexible suite of tools with built-in access to WorldCat, the world's largest bibliographic database. Libraries use Connexion to create and edit quality bibliographic and authority records, which help users find the materials they need faster. Connexion facilitates sharing of records with the entire OCLC cooperative, which benefits libraries worldwide. Roberta has been doing much more of our original cataloging than she was able to take on under the previous manager because of the belief that this task should be reserved for someone with an MLS degree. Allowing her to take on these responsibilities based on her hands-on work experience and OCLC training has saved the LIS division \$2,500 in BCR costs since FY04. She continues her work towards her MLS degree but her enthusiasm for this specialty keeps her ahead of her classmates. A diploma makes any employee more valuable, but not having finished one doesn't prevent any librarian from taking on necessary division work

in an area they are already familiar with provided the right guidance and resources are made available.

2. In addition to their regular acquisition responsibilities, Marjorie Smith and Kathy Madison have been working on a clean-up lists of unique items Mike Price generated from the Montana shared catalog. This list entailed cleaning up the catalog (correcting barcodes, call numbers, locations, etc.) and patron records. These items were uploaded from the old Horizon system a different type of numbering system and need to be either added to or removed from our portion of the current shared catalog. A large majority of these items belong to periodical titles and cannot be removed.
3. On April 5<sup>th</sup> LIS gave two presentations at the monthly meeting of the Public Information Officers at the Governor's office. Jim Kammerer gave an overview of the state depository library program to explain how the State Library collects and distributes information produced by their respective state agencies. Jamie Harmon gave a lively presentation on Blogs, RSS, and Aggregators. While most of the PIOs had heard of these technologies, few had in-depth knowledge, and only one had personal experience using this new community building tool. Jamie highlighted the Government News for Montana, the Drought Advisory Committee, and the brand new Montana State Digital Librarian blogs as compelling examples of how state agency information officers could publish news and events. She explained that what makes blogs distinct from ordinary websites is that they create an exchange between publisher and reader, allowing users to post comments and contribute information. Furthermore, RSS feeds push new information automatically to the user without them having to constantly visit multiple websites. While many of PIOs were enthusiastic about the blog/aggregator/RSS possibilities for their own agencies, a few expressed concern about whether ITSD would allow such technologies on the state network. Another information officer also remarked about the need for state regulation or publishing policies to keep state employees from making online comments that could jeopardize their employment. The general consensus, however, was that blogs are definitely a powerful means for distributing information that deserve serious consideration for possible statewide adoption.