

# FOCUS

a newsletter of the Montana Library Association

[February 2021 Vol. 39 Issue 1]



Montana Library Association  
*From the Mountains to the Prairies*

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## - MLA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE -

### Gavin Woltjer's Update

#### Moving Forward



If you take the time to look back at the updates and messages I have provided in this newsletter, you will see that I have consistently tried to be optimistic and hopeful about the current landscape of not only our profession but of the nation too. January 6 of this year tested my optimism and hope for our country to a degree previously never experienced before. The riot that transpired at the Capital on that day shook me to the core. My mind swirled at what some possible outcomes and ramifications this event could potentially cause to our government and society. As I sat in my office, CNN playing in the background, I gave serious thought to how had the United States of America come to this moment. I will not bore you with my thoughts, and I will not pretend to have had some special epiphany—there are far smarter people than I who will wrestle with this and lend their expertise so we can all glean a modicum of understanding. But think, I did. Fast forward to January 20, 2021. Like many of you, I watched history be made on this Inauguration Day, history that had my eyes glistening from the happiness of knowing that my daughters saw Kamala Harris become the country's first woman to be Vice-President of the United States. Regardless of your personal politics, I hope we can both agree that this monumental occurrence is something to celebrate

I came to the following conclusion on this historic day: it is important to reflect on the past in order to be mindful of the present so we can recognize the opportunities of the future. Our collective past is littered with things our nation still needs to address, and we will not be able to move forward toward our possibilities without addressing these in the present. As with other thoughts I have shared, I do not have a clear answer to what this looks like in the realm of libraries. And even if I did proffer a thought, it would most likely be an inadequate one. But this will not delay me in figuring out how I can lead the Billings Public Library toward a more inclusive and honest future for all who do or do not utilize our services and facilities. As we develop our strategies, we are sure to fail in some regards—failure is part of growth, after all

Each of you reading this today, and each of the libraries represented within this Association, have already done so many incredible things to address our inadequacies and deficiencies within our institutions. And while I understand that fatigue has set in, we must continue to press forward, to earnestly strive for excellence and incorporation as we seek opportunities and inclusion and representation for all points on humanity's spectrum. I admit, this is a daunting task. Some of you have heard me say that I do not like to hear that libraries are essential to our communities. Of course

we are—it is my opinion that we are the cultural backbone. But resting on this word of essential negates—or at least detracts from—how truly versatile and adaptable and dynamic we have always been. Over the course of the past year, libraries have navigated extreme landscapes, and we will continue to traverse these sections of the map previously unexplored. But we must hold up the mirror in order to recognize both what we like and do not like about ourselves. I ask that you join me in making this a resolution for you and your library.

Let us together form new partnerships, lend new thoughts, and discover the possibilities of the future with open hearts and minds. Libraries are an imperfect institution populated with imperfect people, but the optimism and hope we can share with those we serve can shine light into even the darkest places of our history. Be bold. Be intentional. Share your voice. And dream.

***Gavin J. Woltjer***

MLA President

Acting Public Information Officer, City of Billings

Library Director, [Billings Public Library](#).

(Photo by Banik Communications)

[ Gavin Woltjer can be reached at [woltjerg@billingsmt.gov](mailto:woltjerg@billingsmt.gov) ]

## - What is the President Reading? -

### **Killed in Brazil? The Mysterious Death of Arturo “Thunder” Gatti by Jimmy Tobin (Hamilcar Publications, 2020)**

As a fan of boxing and true crime and biography, you can imagine how thrilled I was to discover Hamilcar Publications. Through a series of books, Hamilcar Publications has created a truly fascinating offering of stories that seamlessly blend sports journalism, true crime, mystery, and biography into one solid narrative. I started with Jimmy Tobin’s (@Deftobez) *Killed in Brazil?* At only 71 pages, this micro-biography noir book packs a punch. (C’mon, you knew I had to put one bad pun in these reviews.) Throughout this compact narrative, Tobin explores the mysterious death of Arturo “Thunder” Gatti and some of the questions surrounding this event. Was it murder conducted at the hands of a wife who decided no longer to remain a victim to the violent outbursts of a husband who was in constant battle with real or imagined demons? Or was Gatti’s death a suicide, a final act of desperation to escape the mental and physical anguish one suffers after choosing to be a career gladiator? The heart of the story is really not about Gatti, but, rather, about the impact his death had on those who knew and loved him. Sectioned into three parts, Tobin take the time to set the stage for what unfolds in Brazil, followed by a section that explores the life of Gatti, and finishes with a brief examination of the investigation of Gatti’s death. But Tobin, professional he is, never tips his hand to the reader, and allows for the facts and the evidence to shape the story. And as with any good mystery, this will one will be debated, analyzed, and relegated to the territory of unsolved for the foreseeable future. This book is recommended for high school, public, and academic libraries.

### ***Snow Birds* by Kirsten Hall (author); Jenni Desmond (illustrator) (Abrams, 2020)**

We often turn our heads to the skies during the fall months to see the various types of birds flying overhead seeking respite from colder weather in warmer destinations. For me, hearing the song of the Canadian Goose during their migration is one that contributes to my life’s soundtrack, telling me another season has passed and a new one is beginning. And once this song has played, I train my ear

to hear different songs of those birds that remain in cold locations during winter. For it is their songs that play music of stubborn survival. Kirsten Hall (@HallWaysKirsten) shares some of these songs in her incredible picture book *Snow Birds*. In a series of poems, Hall describes the lives of 17 different birds who do not take an annual migration but remain in their year-round homes. Each poem, paired with gorgeous illustrations by Jenni Desmond, provides for the perfect read aloud experience, and will have parents and children, experienced birders and those new to birding, singing the songs of these winter survivalists. *Snow Birds* received a 2021 Notable Poetry Books and Verse Novels Selected by the NCTE Award for Excellence in Children's Poetry Committee and 2020 Blue Ribbon from The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books. This book is recommended for public, school, and academic libraries.

### **We Know Each Other By Our Wounds by Jude Marr (Animal Heart Press, 2020)**

Poetry that transforms my thinking is an elusive reading experience for me. Jude Marr (@JudeMarr1) has done exactly this in their collection of poems. Marr refuses to be categorized throughout this collection, stating "do not bury me" (18) in labels and social constructs, but see past these constructs to the person willing to share thoughts and fears and dreams with an unknown reader. They further this thought in the powerful poem 'Taxonomies' by exploring how problematic it is to succinctly and quaintly classify anything into categories easily understood or accessed through the constant reduction of language. If this sounds difficult to read, it's not. But it is a challenge to see past our comforts of language, to be open to willingly explore the notion that either-or binaries are not the only method of achieving understanding. Just as Marr is on a journey, the reader, too, is offered a place within this party that explores landscapes and intersections of the phantasmagoria of humanity. This book is recommended for high school, public, and academic libraries.

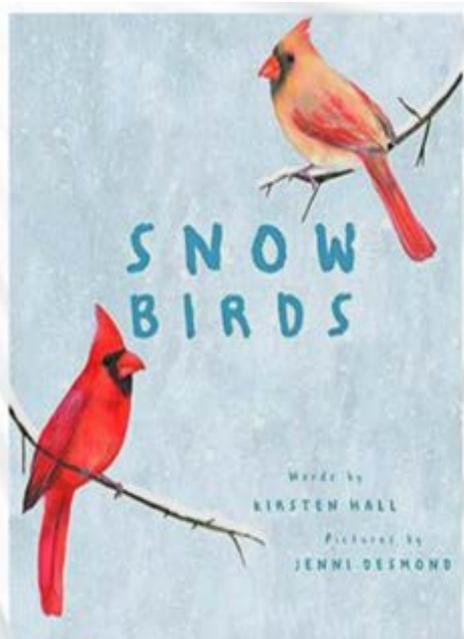
#### **Gavin J. Woltjer**

MLA President

Acting Public Information Officer, City of Billings

Library Director, [Billings Public Library](https://www.billingspubliclibrary.org/).

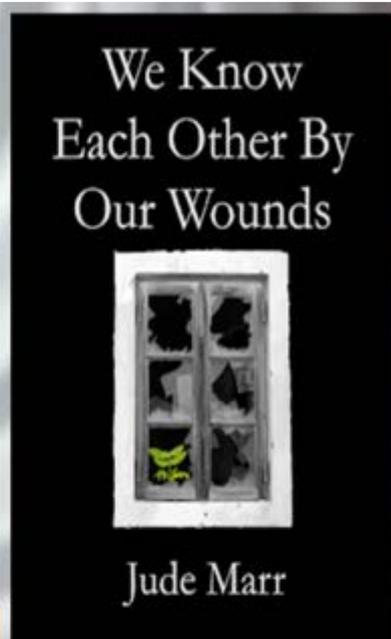
[ Gavin Woltjer can be reached at [woltjerg@billingsmt.gov](mailto:woltjerg@billingsmt.gov) ]



(picture from <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/kirsten-hall/snow-birds/>)



Picture from <https://hamilcarpubs.com/product/killed-in-brazil-the-mysterious-death-of-arturo-thunder-gatti/>



Picture from <https://animalheartpress.net/purchase-we-know-each-other-by-our-wounds/>

## - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE -

### Debbi Kramer's Update

It seems as though I just wrote an article for the December FOCUS and it is now time to write my article for the February edition.

I have many exciting developments to convey to all Montana librarians, staff and trustees. In the past MLA has sponsored a Legislative Reception in January for our representatives, but due to Covid-19 the reception has been cancelled this year, therefore, the MLA Board of Directors will hold its Winter Board was held virtually on Friday, January 29th.

MLA has partnered with Smith Foods by enrolling in the Smith's Food and Drug Inspiring Donations Program. This program works exactly like the AmazonSmile donations program. By using your Smith Food and Drug account a portion of every dollar spent at Smith's Foods and Drug Stores will be donated to MLA on a quarterly basis. If you don't have a Smith's Foods card it is easy to obtain at the Customer Service Desk. More information can be found in the Smith's Inspiring Donations article in this issue of FOCUS. MLA is so excited to partner with Smith's and help libraries all over Montana.

I am also working with the Town Pump Charitable Foundation to acquire funding for all Montana libraries to enhance and enrich their Summer Reading Programs. I have spoken with Town Pump about MLA becoming a partner with them to have funding available each year for library's summer reading programs. If successful, Montana libraries that offer summer reading programs will be able to apply for grants to financially benefit their libraries and offset cost of materials, prizes, programs, etc. for running its summer reading programs. There will be no restrictions on how the money is spent on your summer reading programs. I will pass on more information as it becomes available.

Registration for the 2021 MLA Virtual Conference is open! There are oodles of wonderful, educational programs in the schedule as well as Zoom rooms for attendees to meet with conference exhibitors. All the information about speakers, program descriptions, exhibitors attending and registration is available at the following link: <https://mlai.wildapricot.org/2021-Annual-Conference> or at the MLA website: <https://www.mtlib.org/mla-annual/2021-conference/> Keynote speakers selected are Mandy Smoker Broaddus and Melissa Kwasny with their address entitled: "Real Influence: Montana Writing Communities" and Author Brunch speaker, Tami Haaland and her program, "Libraries, Inspiration and the Magic of Books." All three speakers are Montana residents. The conference committee has worked many hours to select and schedule the programs, create the registration forms and construct all the speaker bios and program descriptions to make all the conference information available to make this an event worth attending.

As most of you know, Offline was cancelled this year. I know most of us are experiencing Zoom fatigue. Because the MLA annual conference will be August 3-6, 2022 in Missoula, perhaps a more robust in person Offline can be planned for February 2022.

At the Fall Board meeting the MLA board made the decision to migrate all of its online content from the [www.mtlib.org](http://www.mtlib.org) to the Wild Apricot site. The migration of this information will save MLA several hundred dollars each year in website costs as the Wild Apricot site hosts the MLA content as part of the yearly fee. It is MLA's hope to have the migration of all materials done by April. An announcement will be made at the 2021 Conference Membership meeting.

To close I would like to ask you all to stay safe and hopefully the pandemic will be just a distant memory before long.

Debbi Kramer, Executive Director  
Montana Library Association, Inc.

[ Debbi Kramer can be reached at [debkmla@hotmail.com](mailto:debkmla@hotmail.com) ]

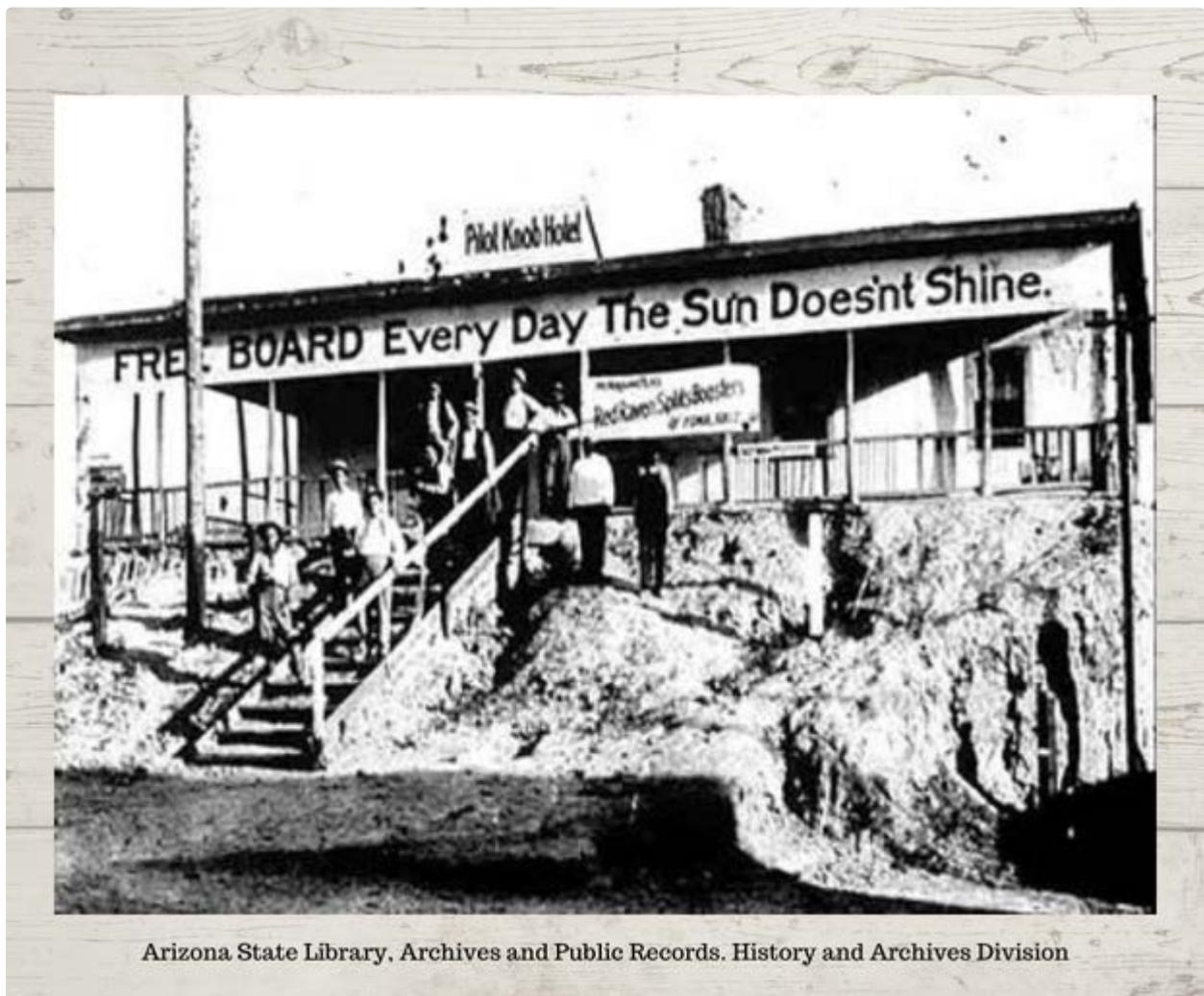
## - EDITOR'S MESSAGE -

### FOCUS Co-Editor Message

Hello All,

My name is Hannah and I'm the new co-editor of the FOCUS. I'm excited about the opportunity to connect with the Montana Library folks through your news, articles, and updates.

I moved to Montana a year and a half ago from the deep desert of the sunniest place on Earth: Yuma, Arizona. It's true, you can Google "sunniest place on earth" and Yuma pops up. For reference, the highest temperature I saw while living there for five years was 124. Yes, you read that right. No, it is not a typo. I survived a 124-degree day. As a fervent heat hater, it is one of my proudest accomplishments. I also managed to live through tarantula hawk wasps, scorpions, dust storms, and all manner of thorny plant life. It wasn't all bad, the tacos alone made it worth the scarier aspects.



Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records. History and Archives Division

For many years I followed job opportunities that happened to be in desert climes. I loved the jobs and the libraries I worked in, but always dreamed of living somewhere greener, with mountains and water. Somewhere the sun didn't try to burn your eyeballs out because there was nothing green to reflect the bright light.

I cannot begin to tell you how happy I have been here. In the midst of an extremely stressful year, Montana has been there for me. I've taken my dogs to the Yellowstone River, dug for agates in the soft dirt, gone fishing in the reservoirs, hiked in the foothills, stomped through the gorgeous snow that I cannot seem to get enough of (though Montana residents tell me this will happen eventually), got engaged on the Rimrocks of Billings, and married the love of my life, Josh.

I very much look forward to meeting my fellow Montana library team members in person. I know many of you through virtual/email contact already, but it's not quite the same. There will come a day, hopefully soon, where we will meet at a conference or retreat, recognize each other's names from emails, and say, "Oh it's you!"

Until that frabjous day, I look forward to getting to know you all through the FOCUS and virtual get-togethers.

Hannah



Photos by Hannah Stewart

## - Committee & Division News -

### **Government Affairs Committee Update**

Montana's 67th legislative session is in full swing, and your Government Affairs committee is working in tandem with our lobbyist and the Montana State Library to ensure that our elected officials hear our collective voice. Here are some of our activities:

- State librarian Jennie Stapp is sending regular communications to WIRED about bills impacting libraries. Please make sure you are subscribed to our email list!
- Committee member Tracy Cook is leading professional development for library advocates.
- Committee member Matt Beckstrom (ALA Chapter Councilor) is investigating ALA's Engage software, offered at no cost to chapters, which makes it easy to send messages to your elected officials on particular bills.
- Co-chair Ann Ewbank is carefully monitoring federal legislation and Biden administration activities.
- Your committee co-chairs meet weekly to discuss bills and strategies and the entire committee meets as needed.
- MLA and the State Library convene a stakeholders' group weekly to strengthen our coalition for Montana broadband.
- Your lobbyist Nanette Gilbertson represents our collective interests at the Capitol every day.

MLA members can engage in advocacy in the following ways:

- Building relationships is the foundation of advocacy. Send a friendly hello and thank you email to your legislators and share the good work you are doing in your libraries. Legislators enjoy hearing about success in their district. Consider publicly acknowledging your elected officials through letters to the editor or op-ed columns in your local paper.
- Visit <https://leg.mt.gov/> to find your legislators and learn how to set up an account to track bills.
- Watch for Calls to Action on WIRED and respond promptly. Bills can progress very quickly and we need to respond promptly in order to influence outcomes.

Thank you for your continued hard work on behalf of Montana. Let's make sure our legislators know just how valuable libraries are!

Submitted by [Ann Ewbank](#) and [Rachel Rawn](#), MLA Government Affairs Committee Co-Chairs

## - AFFILIATE NEWS -

### New Content on Montana Newspapers

The Montana Historical Society is pleased to announce that new content is available to search and browse on the web site [MONTANA NEWSPAPERS](#).



[The Winifred Times](#) is a brand new addition to Montana Newspapers.

This digitization project sponsored by The Winifred Museum covers June 22, 1923-July 10, 1936.

The Big Sandy Cultural Fund concluded a second newspaper digitization project, which provides access to [The Mountaineer](#) (1921-1936), which is a continuation of The Bear Paw Mountaineer (1911-1921), the subject of their first project.

The Big Horn County Historical Museum in Hardin, Montana has sponsored a project digitizing an additional 15 years of [The Hardin Tribune-Herald](#). With this extension, The Hardin Tribune and The Hardin Tribune-Herald is now available from 1908-1933.

MONTANA NEWSPAPERS, a service of the Montana Historical Society, is freely accessible to all Internet users; no subscriptions or fees are required. To learn about having your local newspaper

digitized, contact us at [MHSDigital@mt.gov](mailto:MHSDigital@mt.gov).

Natasha Hollenbach, Digital Projects Librarian  
Montana Historical Society  
[nhollenbach@mt.gov](mailto:nhollenbach@mt.gov)

## New Season of MTPR's "The Write Question" Kicks Off With New Host



The new season of MTPR's *The Write Question* will debut on Thursday, Dec. 3 at 7 p.m. featuring a new voice and a familiar one. Incoming host Lauren Korn will sit down with outgoing host Sarah Aronson to swap perspectives on hosting the program, writing, longing, whimsy, and more. The Write Question kicks off its fourteenth year on Montana Public Radio, as well as on a variety of public radio stations across the West, including Yellowstone Public Radio and Spokane Public Radio. Listeners can also subscribe to *The Write Question* at [mtp.org](http://mtp.org)

*The Write Question* has historically featured hundreds of authors from around the western United States. Korn said she intends to expand the program's geographical boundaries

"My hope is that *The Write Question* becomes a diverse literary space," she said. "The stories of Montana and of the American West are vital, and I still want to center those voices; but I think it's imperative, especially now, when there's a certain ease of accessibility, that listeners of *The Write Question* are able to see—or to hear—beyond our state and regional, and even national borders, and I hope listeners keep me accountable to this idea."

Lauren R. Korn holds an M.A. in poetry from the University of New Brunswick, where she was the recipient of the Tom Riesterer Memorial Prize and the Angela Ludan Levine Memorial Book Prize. She currently lives in Missoula, Montana, where she is the Director of the Montana Book Festival, programming a virtual festival this September with over 30 events and 80 authors from Montana and around the world.

Producer Peter Hoag has been added to the team of *The Write Question*. Hoag also produces the MTPR podcast *Can Do: Essential Business Lessons*. Authors Anne Helena Peterson (Montana), Jess Walter (Washington), Kerri Arsenault (Maine), Gwen Florio (Montana), and Elissa Washuta (Washington & Ohio) will be featured on this season of *The Write Question*.

Montana Public Radio is a public service of the University of Montana and broadcasts on 89.1 Missoula (KUFM), 91.5 Missoula, city (K218AI), 91.9 Hamilton (KUFN), 89.5 Polson (KPJH), 90.1 Kalispell, Whitefish, North Valley (KUKL), 90.5 Libby (KUFL), 91.7 Kalispell, city (K219BN), 101.3 Swan Lake (K267BJ), 91.3 Butte (KAPC), 91.7 Helena (KUHM), 91.7 Dillon (K219DN) and 89.9 Great Falls (KGPR).

For more information contact: [Michael Marsolek](mailto:Michael.Marsolek@mtpr.org)

Learn more at <http://mtp.org>.

# News Bits from the Great Falls Public Library

## New Drive-up/Pick-up Window

With help from a CARES grant, the Great Falls Public Library was able to take an old book-drop build-out on the alley side of the library and turn it into a drive-up/walk-up service window. The pick up window operates just like bank teller windows with a sliding drawer for materials to be passed out to patrons. There was some troubleshooting to be done with an intercom system- the original buzzer and speaker were not loud enough to be heard above the hustle and bustle of a regular circulation department, so an extra speaker mounted on some shelving in the middle of the room gives a boost to the buzz. Patrons can now place a hold online, then swing by the pick up window when their hold becomes available. Since we have reduced our open-to-the-public hours, this makes it possible not just for our vulnerable patrons to have safe access to reading and entertainment material, but allows us to provide services even when the building itself is closed. It also gives us a nice little ray of daylight in an otherwise windowless work area!

## Meeting Room Remodel

If you ever attended an event in the old Cordingly Room of the Great Falls Public Library, you may well have felt like you were transported back to 1968, but no longer! The Cordingly Room, named for library supporters Bill and Mary Cordingly, was scheduled to be renovated during the summer months of 2020. That renovation was one of the few things not sidelined by a global pandemic, and GFPL is excited to begin hosting events in a new, bright, welcoming atmosphere! Gone is the dark paneling! Gone is the old (possibly vinyl, possibly ancient brown Laffy Taffy) accordion door that hid an even older refrigerator! Gone are the old fluorescent lights and the jaundiced tinge they gave everything in the room! The “new” Cordingly Room is outfitted with dimmable LED lighting, a new sound system, fresh silver-screen paint behind the stage, and a modern color palette. We were also able to update our small meeting room and the adjacent hallway, and the biggest change there is the amazing look of those solid wood tables after they were refinished!

## Bilingual ASL Storytime

For just over a year, the Great Falls Public Library Youth Services Department has been partnering with a local organization, Conservatory ASL Northwest, to bring bilingual spoken English and American Sign Language storytimes to our community. Before the pandemic we were able to offer a number of in-person events featuring Deaf and hearing presenters reading children’s stories aloud and in ASL. This partnership has weathered the storm of a global pandemic, and is going stronger than ever. Our partners at ASL-CAN fully embraced the new online platforms that programs had to take, and our library Youtube channel now features an entire playlist of dozens of bilingual storytime videos, available to watch anytime.

More information about CAN from their website, [aslcan.com](http://aslcan.com):

“C.A.N. is a Deaf-led organization that focuses on the linguistic minority group of the American Sign Language community. Our vision includes reaching children and adults of all hearing levels to empower them with access through American Sign Language.

The founders of C.A.N. are deaf and hearing parents of deaf and hearing children. We see the need first hand for a community that embraces linguistic diversity, utilizes and encourages individual strengths, and supports each other in areas of challenge. We believe sign language gives deaf people access to the world and gives the world access to deaf people. We believe sign language benefits everyone.”

## Mask kits!

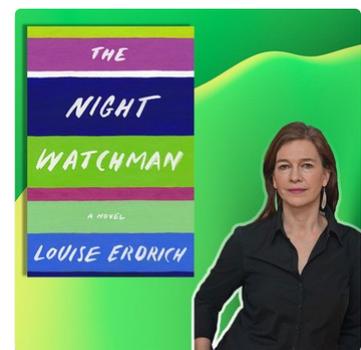
Not to mention the pandemic again, but with a pandemic going on we found our most popular program to be mask making kits! With kids returning to in-person learning at our public schools back in September, we knew the need for masks that kids would want to wear would be high. Our mask kits

were meant to not only fill a definite need, but to give children and young adults agency in what was felt by many to be an otherwise very out-of-control situation. Each kit contains everything needed to make two masks, with a wide and fun variety of fabrics from which to choose. We have given out over a thousand DIY masks since September, and have many hundreds still to distribute. The kits were all originally cut and assembled by Youth Services staff, and production has recently been picked up by a dedicated volunteer who brings her quilting savvy and a beautiful crafting room and cutting table to the project. Along with simple written instructions included in the kit, our Youth Services Librarian, Rae McFadden, filmed a "how-to" video (complete with ASL interpretation inset video) that is available to view anytime on our Youtube channel.



## Putting the Unity in Community: One Book One Bozeman

One Book One Bozeman, our yearly community read program, officially kicks off in February! Currently Bozeman Public Library is still serving our community via curbside services, and have hesitations to hold gatherings and in person programs (which, of course, conflicts with our desire to share our programs far and wide!) Like so many of our colleagues, we've shifted our current program offerings to an all virtual format, and the same goes for our OBOB happenings. The book selected by librarians at BPL is *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich, which centers on the colorful and complex intertwined characters of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and their community, and the Native American termination legislature of the 1950's. The title character is actually based on Erdrich's own grandfather and his role representing his tribe during the Indian Termination Policy.



A negative of coronavirus that we were able to shift into a positive is in our book selection: we picked a newly published book by an award-winning author! We won't be having an in-person author event this year, contrary to years past, but we've adjusted our offerings to include virtual presentations as well as an extensive guide to enhance the experience of *The Night Watchman*. This will be available on the One Book One Bozeman website, [www.bozemanlibrary.org/obob](http://www.bozemanlibrary.org/obob) on February 1, 2021. In our programming around the book, we committed to amplifying Native voices and Native experiences as well as exploring themes from the book. We're quite proud of this year's lineup: we have two fantastic presenters from Humanities Montana, a mother/daughter set of artists, a discussion with an MSU professor, and book clubs galore!

BPL is encouraging individuals (not limited to Bozeman!) to read the book, introduce it to their book groups, neighbors, friends, and family, and participate in virtual options because we believe in the unity of our Montana community through the shared reading experience. Please reach out with any questions!

[Corey L. Ffiles](#)

Reference, Programming, and Outreach Librarian  
Bozeman Public Library

Photo from <https://www.bozemanlibrary.org/events/seasonal-programs/one-book-one-bozeman>

## **Polar Express StoryWalk in Livingston**

As 2020 waned with Covid-19 restrictions dimming the holiday season, Livingston-Park County Public Library partnered with the Livingston Recreation Department to spread some cheer to families through a Polar Express StoryWalk. The Livingston Business Improvement District provided the funds to bring this classic story to life in sixteen downtown business windows.

Additionally, we distributed coupons for hot cocoa or an ice cream scoop to 700 children in the community via school backpacks as well as a downloadable file from the web. Each story board included a QR Code that could be scanned linking participants to a GoogleMap of route as well as access to the coupon for goodies. The final story page included a stop at the Murray Hotel for a photo in front of their Christmas tree and the first gift of Christmas (a bell) for each child.

Judging from the social media stats it was very well received by the community. Families were assured of a safe and socially distanced activity with the dual goal of bringing foot traffic and business to the downtown over the holiday season.

We were so encouraged by the response that we will be teaming up with the Recreation Department each quarter in 2021, providing mobile StoryWalks to Park County, using our Bookmobile to bring it to far-flung locations.

[Lisa Sukut](#) & [Michele Boyd](#)

Youth Services Librarians  
Livingston-Park County Public Library



## Polar Express StoryWalk

PHOTOS BY MAGGIE TARR, LIVINGSTON RECREATION MANAGER



## Framing the Future: Advancing Strategic Planning in Rural and Small Libraries

*"We believe in the power of planning to know where we're going. For libraries, planning starts with talking to our communities and listening to everyone's diverse voices."*

-Jennie Stapp, Montana State Librarian

The Montana State Library in partnership with Library Strategies was awarded an Institute of Museum and Library Services Community Catalyst grant to assist small and rural public and tribal libraries with strategic planning. Five other state libraries - Arizona, Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming - are participating in this project.

Ultimately, the state libraries hope to see an increase in the number of libraries that have strategic plans. The vision is for everyone in a community to feel welcome and receive library services that meet their needs and wants. The states believe that strategic planning with a community listening component helps make that happen.

The grant has multiple phases and is designed to address concepts around community listening and service as well as barriers to strategic planning. It will end with trained facilitators who can help small and rural libraries create strategic plans that include a community listening component. These facilitators will be available at no cost to low cost.

The grant has the following timeline and phases.

**January – March 2021** Phase one involves training attendees about the concepts surrounding welcoming everyone and becoming a window to the world.

**March – June 2021** Phase two involves online training that addresses the importance of strategic planning, the barriers that keep libraries from planning, and ideas for overcoming those barriers.

Montana's session will happen at the 2021 Montana Library Association conference.

**September – October 2021** Phase three involves training facilitators to lead strategic plan efforts that incorporate community listening.

**October 2021 – July 2022** The final phase involves facilitating strategic plans in the six-state region. It will continue beyond the grant award period.

If your library is interested in participating in this project, please contact [Tracy Cook](mailto:TCook2@mt.gov) ([TCook2@mt.gov](mailto:TCook2@mt.gov)) at the Montana State Library for more information. Libraries are asked to take the courses in phase one and two and will be connected with a trained facilitator in the final phase.

## **Libraries Welcome Back Students with meeScan Self-Checkout**

Self-checkout is now easier than ever. Mansfield, Missoula College Payne Family and Law Libraries welcomed back Spring semester students on January 11th with meeScan, a new self-checkout service. Users are able to check out items where they find them and use the scanner at the checkout desk to deactivate items. Curbside pickup and campus delivery of physical materials is available by the Mansfield Library.

Mansfield Library and Missoula College Payne Family Library are offering modified Course Reserves during the 2021 Spring semester. All physical materials placed on Reserve will be allowed to leave the library, have a minimum check out period of 24 hours and will be quarantined upon return to the library.

Library social media team members posted pictures of library faculty and staff bookshelves to promote Library Shelfie Day on January 27th. Follow the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library on Instagram at [mansfieldlibrary\\_umt](https://www.instagram.com/mansfieldlibrary_umt) for Spring semester highlights!

### **[Patti McKenzie](#)**

Dean's Assistant  
Mansfield Library  
University of Montana

Photos by  
Mark Fritch



## - PROGRAMS, PROMOTIONS, PROJECTS -

### MLA Virtual Conference 2021

Registration for the annual MLA 2021 Virtual Conference will open on Tuesday, January 19th. The conference information link is <https://mlai.wildapricot.org/2021-Annual-Conference>. On the conference link is the President's Welcome statement, printable conference schedule, program descriptions and speaker biographies. MLA is pleased to announce keynote speakers, Mandy Smoker Broaddus and Melissa Kwasny. Their keynote address is entitled "Real Influence: Montana Writing Communities." Author Brunch speaker is Tami Haaland with her speaker topic "Libraries, Inspiration and the Magic of Books."

Registration amounts for the conference are Single Member Registration--\$100; Student, Trustee, Retired Members Registration--\$50; 6 Current Members from same library--\$500; and Non-Member Registration--\$175. Registration can be completed online with a credit card or an invoice can be printed and mailed in with a check. Please use this link: <https://mlai.wildapricot.org/event-4038508>

Zoom meeting links will be send to registered attendees two weeks before the conference.

Debbi Kramer, Executive Director  
Montana Library Association, Inc.  
[debkmla@hotmail.com](mailto:debkmla@hotmail.com)

## Seeking Director-at-Large (East)

Hello Montana and Happy February 2021,

MLA 2021 is coming up quickly and you are all invited and encouraged to attend. The MLA board is also looking to fill some openings, including the Director-at-Large (East), a position I currently hold. I have served as the PNLA representative in the past as well. If you have any questions about either role, please feel free to contact me at [cclark@bozeman.net](mailto:cclark@bozeman.net). Either role would be a good way to serve MLA, gain some leadership experience and grow professionally. I hope to see your names on the roster soon.

### Carmen Clark

Department Head Adult Programming and Outreach  
Bozeman Public Library  
MLA, Director-at-Large (East)

## Cates is going virtual for 2021!

And we hope you'll go with us!

In order to continue our important mission of raising money for scholarships for library education, the MLA Cates Committee is asking for your usual amazing Cates Silent Auction contributions. But this year, we'll be posting the auction items online and folks will have a chance to submit a bid for the item—all virtually. We are also hoping contributors will be kind enough to cover the cost of shipping auction items to the eventual winner, as a last resort. (We are thinking about other methods of delivering items).

If you can contribute, please send a photo and description of your silent auction contribution to Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson at [lisameckjack@gmail.com](mailto:lisameckjack@gmail.com) by March 1, 2021. We will have the auction page open for raffle chances from April 1-April 14 and will announce the winners of the random drawings at the MLA Conference April 14-17, 2021.

You can buy a chance for an item - 1 for \$5 or 6 for \$25. So, it's pretty much like the in-person Cates Silent Auction you've come to know and love at conference—only virtual!

Stay tuned to hear more. For now, start pulling together your awesome crafts, jewelry, food, wine, book, what-have-you contributions. Let's raise some money for librarian scholarships—all in the name of Sheila Cates!

**Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson**

[lisameckjack@gmail.com](mailto:lisameckjack@gmail.com)

## MLA Becomes Part of Smith's Food & Drug Inspiring Donations Program

The Montana Library Association is now part of the Smith's Food & Drug Inspiring Donations Program. This program allows MLA to raise funds from members based on the shopping they do every day. Once you link your card to MLA all you have to do is shop at Smith's and swipe your

shoppers card. Smith's Inspiring Donations will donate 0.5% of all eligible spending to organizations that customers have linked to their Rewards Card.

To Use the Smith's Food & Drug Inspiring Donations Program:

Visit <http://www.smithsfoodanddrug.com/inspire>. Once logged into you Smith's Food & Drug account search for Montana Library Association, Inc either by name or HN472 and then click Enroll. New users will need to create an account which requires some basic information, a valid email address and a rewards card.

\*Customers must have a registered Smith's Food & Drug rewards card account to link to an organization.

\*If a you do not yet have a Smith's Food & Drug rewards card, they are available at the customer service desk at any Smith's Food & Drug

REMEMBER, purchases will not count until after you register your rewards card.

Participants must swipe their registered Smith's Food & Drug rewards card or use the phone number that is related to their registered Smith's Food & Drug rewards card when shopping for each purchase to count.

## **Ready 2 Read – Updates and Announcements!**

The Montana State Library is excited to announce that the Ready 2 Read website has been revamped and is now available for your patrons and families to use. Designed as a public/community-facing resource, the Ready 2 Read website provides information on the importance of early literacy, how parents/families/caregivers can find support for early literacy at their local library, and gives tips and additional resources on how to further encourage early literacy learning. We are eager to share this with Montana, and we would love any and all Montana libraries to include this on their webpages. Please feel free to share any useful early literacy resources to add to the Ready 2 Read website. We hope to update this website regularly, and any new resources are welcome additions. You can find the new website at <http://ready2readmontana.org>.

### **Ready 2 Read Texting Program – Outreach Push**

We are looking to expand the reach of the Ready 2 Read Texting program, and are asking for YOUR help to do so! The Ready 2 Read Texting program was launched in October 2015 in order to provide parents and caregivers of four-year-old's free early literacy tips through texts on their phone. People who sign up will receive 3 text messages per week for 8 months that provide easy, fun, and useful ideas to help children practice their early literacy skills. Signing up for the program is free and easy – you can simply text "SIGNUP" to 406-204-3583.

To help spread the word, the State Library has social media templates that you can use to publicize this program. You have two options for templates:

Option 1: These templates have the Ready 2 Read branding/animals, as well as text from each of the early literacy tips included. You can choose which tip you would like to share each week, add the sample caption, and then just upload it directly to your library's account.

Option 2: These templates have the Ready 2 Read branding/animals, but no text. You will have to add the text yourself. This option is good for people who want to personalize the tips, or want to share

other early literacy tips with their patrons and just need a fun visual template to use.

MSL has provided a sample caption to include with your social media post that has signup information for the R2R Texting program, but you are of course welcome to use your own captions as well. You can download the templates and see the caption text on the R2R Texting page on the MSL website here: <http://libraries.msl.mt.gov/earlyliteracy/r2rtexting>

If you have any questions, please email Amelea Kim at [akim@mt.gov](mailto:akim@mt.gov).

## Have You Paid Your Membership Dues!?!

Have you paid your membership dues? If not, why not? The Montana Library Association counts on all Montana librarians, staff, and trustees to help us fight for the rights of all our patrons to maintain dedicated and strong libraries for all Montana residents.

Beginning in January, Montana will be in the midst of another legislative session. One of MLA's obligations is to advocate for all librarians, library staff, and trustees, and more importantly the Montana State Library. MLA not only advocates at the state level but also at the federal level. Your yearly dues are what allow MLA to advocate for library lovers. If your library, its programs, your staff, and your patrons are important to you, please pay your dues.

Not only do your dues help with advocacy but there are many other membership perks as well.

- MLA conventions and workshops offer a wide spectrum of training for librarians, trustees, and friends.
- MLA provides the *Focus* newsletter and Wired-MT listserv for communication and library and patron assistance.
- The MLA website, [www.mtlib.org](http://www.mtlib.org), provides information about membership and programs.
- MLA sponsors liaisons to national and regional library associations including ALA, PNLA, and MPLA.
- MLA promotes intellectual freedom and awareness as well as concrete marketing ideas for implementation in your own library.
- MLA lobbies for legislation beneficial to libraries and keeps librarians well informed of developments during legislative sessions.
- MLA offers scholarships for library education, conference attendance, and professional development.
- MLA gives annual awards for outstanding accomplishments.
- MLA provides leadership training and opportunities.

As a show of good faith, MLA allowed lapsed and non-members to attend the virtual Fall Retreat under the Institutional registration at a reduced rate. This will not be the case for the virtual annual conference in April. All those attending through an Institutional registration will need to be a current MLA member. For those with lapsed memberships, you will be required to register and pay non-member fees.

If the future of Montana libraries is important to you, please take a few minutes and renew your membership or join as a new member. <https://mlai.wildapricot.org/>  
Thank you.

Debbi Kramer, Executive Director

## **-MICRO-REVIEWS -**

### **Devolution: A Firsthand Account of the Rainier Sasquatch Massacre by Max Brooks**

I have to admit, I have been on a bit of a Bigfoot binge since October 2020 when we presented a program on Bigfoot on Zoom titled "The Lore of Bigfoot". You can watch it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mE3GuKwdsQU>

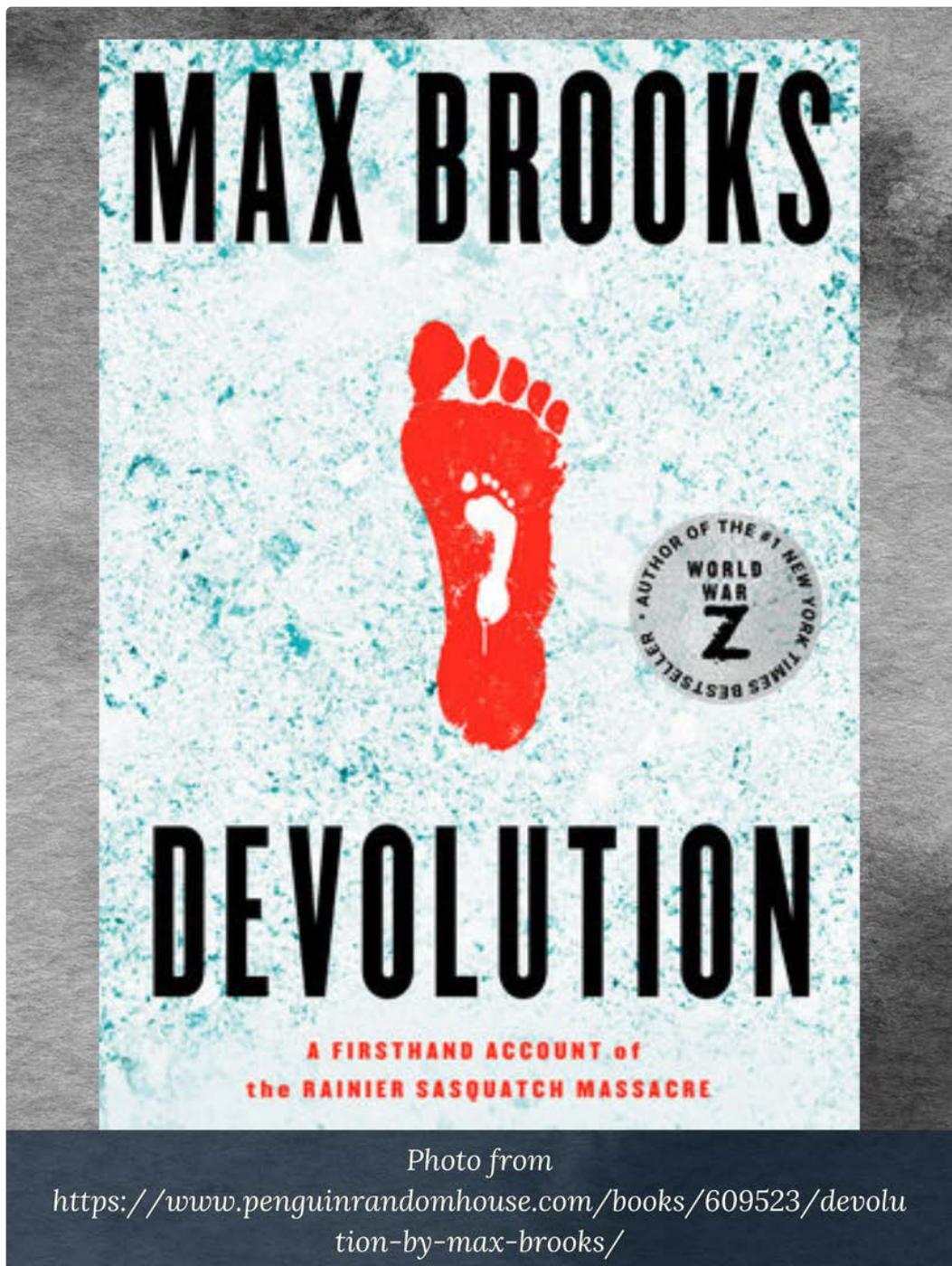
I listened to podcasts about Bigfoot (not sure what to think about them) and then I came across an interview with Max Brooks. He is the author of World War Z and The Zombie Survival Guide and a pretty smart guy. (editors note: He is also the son of Mel Brooks) He is a non-resident fellow at the Modern War Institute at West Point. Having lived at West Point and in the shadow of Mount Rainier, I felt compelled to pick up the book. I was not disappointed.

Author Blake Crouch said this about the book: "the Bigfoot thriller you didn't know you needed in your life, and one of the greatest horror novels I've ever read".

The premise of the book is that Mount Rainier erupts and cuts off the remote high-tech community Greenloop from the rest of the world. Rescue, if it is coming, might be a while. What follows is a firsthand account of what happened in Greenloop after the eruption.

[Carmen Clark](#)

Bozeman Public Library



- MARGINALIA -

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## Submissions Open for the April 2021 Issue!

**REMINDER:** The submission deadline for the April newsletter is **March 20**. Please email your library news, micro-reviews & photos (with captions & attributions) to [mlaFOCUSeditor@gmail.com](mailto:mlaFOCUSeditor@gmail.com). Thank You!

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The *FOCUS* welcomes your input! To submit feedback, articles, reviews, inquiries, and ideas—or to place an ad or provide sponsorship—please contact the editorial staff directly:



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