



The News-to-use-Letter of the Maine Library Association

MLA-to-Z: A Member Benefit

By Rosemary Waltos

Welcome to the first issue of *MLA-to-Z*, a quarterly newsletter of the Maine Library Association. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a continuing education tool and a communication vehicle for Maine's library community and its advocates. MLA's President-Elect Richard Boulet, Director of the Blue Hill Public Library, says "Continuing education is one of the most tangible and direct benefits we have to offer to ourselves through our association. I encourage all of you to make future contributions to this promising effort."

Starting with this first issue, *MLA-to-Z* will be published and distributed quarterly in both online and hardcopy formats to MLA members. Back issues will be archived and available on the MLA website at www.mainerlibraries.org. Each issue will include reports on association business, articles on technology, legislative news, as well as feature articles of interest to people in a variety of library settings.

In this premiere issue, Sally Bannen examines what it means to be one of Maine's 96 solo public library information specialists in her article "Solo Librarians." Read about how, alone or with volunteers, they run their small public libraries. In this and upcoming issues, look for regular features on integrating and using library technology and providing information literacy services.

It is our intention that *MLA-to-Z* be a collaborative effort between newsletter volunteers, contributing writers and our readers. As an incentive to get readers' feedback,

anyone who offers their comments, suggestions or observations to this inaugural issue will automatically be eligible to win a free MLA membership. Guest writers are also needed to contribute feature articles. Anyone interested in contributing an article or an idea for one, contact us at mlatoznewsletter@yahoo.com.

The members of the Communication Committee want to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the person behind the Maine Memo. We wish to thank Lyn Smith, Director of the Pittsfield Public Library and Communication Committee member, for her years of editing and presenting *Maine Memo*.



Her force and insight led our Committee to take up the torch of keeping Maine libraries informed, and continuing to foster excellence in library service to the citizens of Maine.

The Question...

What formal or informal employee/volunteer incentives and rewards do you use to recognize a job well done in your Library?

An Invitation to "Sound Off"

"No one of us is as smart as all of us."

Jack Welch, former CEO of GE

Have something on your mind that you think would be of interest to your librarian colleagues around the state? Well, don't keep it to yourself! Put it down in 500 words or so and send it off to the *MLA-to-Z Newsletter* at mlatoznewsletter@yahoo.com, and before you know it, your comments will be the talk of the profession! All the usual caveats of civil discourse apply, but otherwise it's up to you to say whatever you want, however you want to say it, as long as it more or less relates to libraries in Maine (more rather than less is preferred). Grab the old keyboard (or quill) and go to it - we're all waiting to hear what you think!

...What's Your Answer?

As a regular feature of this newsletter, we will be posing a question to our readers and asking them to respond. We will share as many responses as space allows in our next newsletter. Those responding will have their names entered in a drawing to win a one year membership to Maine Library Association.

Send your response by April 30 to the MLA Communication Committee, mlatoznewsletter@yahoo.com, or MLA Communications Committee, Rosemary Waltos, Auburn Public Library, 49 Spring Street, Auburn, ME 04210.

Library Lynx

Each issue will offer some links to freely available resources that librarians may find useful in one way or another. If you have a suggestion, please send the URL along with a short description to share with your colleagues. Here are a few resources for this issue that you might want to take a look at:

Care to peek into Leonardo DaVinci's notebooks? Thanks to the British Library and Bill Gates, you can, although only for a few months. If you have Microsoft's new VISTA operating system, you can look through two of DaVinci's notebooks, one of which is owned by Gates and one

by the British Library. If you have any other operating system, you can still see one of the notebooks (and fourteen other rare British Library books that seldom are available to the public). Could be a good link for your patrons, too. <http://www.bl.uk/ttp2/ttp2.html>.

Wondering what libraries should do to prosper in the age of Google? Roy Tennant says, among other things, that we should "Out Google Google." In his presentation at a recent OCLC meeting, "Points of Pain, Peculiar Possibilities, & A Patron Paradise, or a slightly arbitrary set of hare-brained ideas," he presents a vision of how libraries can better serve patrons in this age of Google, and prosper in the process.

Tennant is the director of the California Digital Library and knows whereof he speaks. Download the slides from his presentation at http://www.oclc.org/research/dss/ppt/dss_tennant.ppt.

Have you ever run across a term you haven't encountered before while reading a journal or library newsletter, and discovered the term isn't in your copy of Webster's? Don't despair, ODLIS has you covered. ODLIS, of course, is the Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science, and it is just what its name implies. It contains over 4200 cross-indexed terms so the odds are pretty good that if it has to do with librarianship, you'll find it here. <http://lu.com/odlis>.



Maine Library Association

Committed to promoting and enhancing the value of libraries and librarianship

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Council Meetings

The MLA Council meets quarterly. All meetings are open to the membership. Upcoming meetings are Fridays, 9:30am-12:30pm unless otherwise noted:

May 4, 2007 – Annual Meeting -- Auburn Public Library

November 4 – 6, 2007 -- Annual Conference, Augusta Civic Center, for information visit <http://mainelibraries.info/>

Related Information and Organizations

Maine Library Trustee Association
<http://mainelibraries.org/committees/trustees.htm>

Maine Association of School Libraries
<http://www.maslibraries.org/>

Friends of Maine Libraries
<http://www.friendsofmainelibraries.org/>

Maine State Library
<http://www.maine.gov/msl/index.shtml>

New England Library Association
<http://www.nelib.org/>

Special Libraries Association
<http://www.sla.org>

American Library Association
<http://www.ala.org/>

Maine Library Association Membership
<http://mainelibraries.org/membership.htm>

2007 Maine Public Library Standards
<http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/standards/index.htm>

Maine Library Jobs Listing
<http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/jobjar.shtml>

Editorial

MLA-to-Z is a publication of the Maine Library Association and a product of the Communication Committee. Communication Committee members are Sarah Campbell, Sally Bannen, Jim Campbell, Nancy P. McGinnis, Lyn Smith, and Rosemary Waltos.

Subscriptions

Nonmember subscriptions, changes of address and inquiries should be emailed to *MLA-to-Z* at mlatoznewsletter@yahoo.com or snail mailed to MLA Communications Committee, Rosemary Waltos, Auburn Public Library, Auburn ME, 04210. To unsubscribe to the e-newsletter, please e-mail mlatoznewsletter@yahoo.com with the words "Unsubscribe Newsletter" in the subject area and you will be removed from the mailing list.

Article Submissions

Unless otherwise noted, all submissions should be sent to mlatoznewsletter@yahoo.com.

Flying Solo in Maine

By Sally Bannen

Americans love individual accomplishment. From Charles Lindbergh flying solo across the Atlantic ocean to Karen Thorndike, the first American woman to sail around the world solo, Americans celebrate the focus and dedication of solo personal accomplishment.

Here in Maine, there are no ticker tape parades, as there were for Lindbergh, nor thousands waiting at the dock, as there were for Thorndike, but there are many women and men accomplishing very important work for their local communities “solo” by keeping local libraries running day after day, week after week, year after year. These stalwart folks are Maine’s “solo” librarians.

About a third of Maine’s public libraries are operated by solo librarians. While these librarians are quick to point out that they usually have the help of local volunteers to keep the doors open, and of local library boards to raise funds and see to capital improvements, solo librarians in Maine certainly meet the Special Libraries Association’s definition of a solo librarian: “an isolated librarian or information collector/provider who has no professional peers within the immediate organization.”

To get a feel for what it is like to serve as a solo librarian in Maine, the *MLA-to-Z Newsletter* checked in with half-a-dozen solo librarians in small public libraries around the state. While every local library is different, just as every town is different in important ways, the solo librarians we contacted share a number of common characteristics.

Most solo librarians work part time at their library work (some have other jobs as well), and their libraries are open a few days per week. Most are paid for a set number of hours of library work. Not surprisingly, most also “volunteer” a good number of hours per week beyond what they are paid for because, as one commented, “there is always so much to be accomplished. I always think of more things that ‘should’ be done.”

Solo librarians attend to everything necessary to keep a library working smoothly: acquisitions and cataloging, reading at children’s hours, arranging special events, dealing regularly with ILL requests and processing, keeping circulation records, cleaning

the floors, and the list goes on. They seem genuinely happy to do the work required, even though needs can seem “overwhelming” at times. But there are rewards, too, as these comments from those interviewed indicate.

“I am given a lot of freedom to make decisions about how things are done.”

“I get the most pleasure from knowing what our patrons want and hearing their satisfaction when they find a book or other material they enjoy.”

“I can work faster since I work alone.”

“I particularly enjoy children, reading, and libraries - and love to multi-task.”

“I don’t have to wrestle with the problems of employees except myself.”

“I’m never bored.”

“The biggest joy is knowing all the regular library patrons.”

These satisfactions are important because there are also downsides to being a solo librarian. One common regret is that, despite the wonderful help volunteers provide, “there are never enough hands - a lot of projects get pushed to the side.”

Another challenge is the feeling of professional isolation and lack of feedback from peers. To overcome that challenge, most of those interviewed try to get together with other librarians in their areas, and draw heavily on the services provided by the Maine State Library. Several said they also look forward to the annual meeting of the Maine Library Association as a way to gather new ideas, get feedback on projects they have planned, and just talk with others who have the same concerns and interests.

There is also one other characteristic that almost all solo librarians seem to share: an unusual level of modesty. When asked about their work, solo librarians are likely to begin by talking about the great volunteers who make it possible to keep their libraries open, and about the library boards who take on the burden of financial management and fund-raising.

There is no doubt that volunteers and library boards are critical to the success of local public libraries in Maine, but quietly, without benefit of ticker tape parades or other fanfare, it is Maine’s solo librarians who make a major contribution to bringing the gifts of reading, information, and community to

tens of thousands of Maine people every day. Now that is an accomplishment!

MLA-to-Z wishes to thank the following solo librarians for their help in learning about this line of library work: Maureen Cole - Center Hollis Public Library, Erica Millette - Monhegan Memorial Library, Virginia Rundell - North Gorham Public Library, Sue Trouwborst - Bremen Public Library, Kenneth J. Scott - Community Library (in Lyman), and Madelon Kelly - Gibbs Library (in Washington).

Want to learn more about solo libraries? Here are just a few resources:

The One Person Library: A Newsletter for Librarians and Management. Judith A. Siess. Information Bridges International Inc. 5 February 2007 <<http://www.ibi-opl.com/newsletter/index.html>>. (Available in text and electronic versions, for a fee)

Siess, Judith A. “Flying Solo : Librarian, Manage Thyself.” *American Libraries* 30.2 (1999): 31-33. (Available for free through MARVEL)

Siess, Judith A. *The New OPL Sourcebook: A Guide for Solo And Small Libraries*. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, c2006 (Available from Maine State Library collection)

Solo Librarians Division. *Special Libraries Association*. 5 February 2007 <<http://units.sla.org/division/dsol/>>.



John Clark’s *Ten ways to tell if you are a solo librarian*

1-People in the checkout line hand you a reserve request written on the back of their grocery list.

2-People tell the town manager you work too much because they saw your car at the library after 9 P.M.

3-You stop at yard sales to buy movies for the library.

[continued, next page]

4-You have a network of fellow scavengers who save Coke, Pepsi and Powerade caps so you can redeem the points for more stuff for the library.

5-Your fingerprints are on every item in the library.

6-You debate weeding a title you just know cousin Emma will hate you for, but do it anyway.

7-You're on the delivery service, but drop off an ILL pouch in the next town after hours because you're going there anyway to do some grocery shopping.

8-You visit other libraries and the first place you go is their used book shelf.

9-There is a bigger library that has adopted you, and you have done the same for a smaller library.

10-You have done story hour while simultaneously checking out books and answering a reference question over the phone.

Tech Talk

By Jim Campbell

Libraries, especially small libraries, have to watch their pennies carefully. One area in which libraries - or anyone else - can gain some real savings is in checking out Free and/or Open Source software. Although they embody somewhat different philosophies, these two types of software share some important characteristics. First, they offer software at no cost to the user. Second, users are free to modify the software as long as they, in turn, make their improvements available to anyone else who may wish to use them.

So, let's look at some Free and/or Open Software programs that may fill the bill for you or your patrons.

A good first stop is www.openoffice.org. OpenOffice is a complete office suite and its creators have a rather ambitious goal for the program: "To create, as a community, the leading international office suite.." They take that goal seriously, and in my opinion, the program shows it.

OpenOffice includes a word processor; a spreadsheet; a slide presentation program; a graphics and illustration program; and a set of database tools which can do the job whether you just need a simple database to create a bibliography, or even if you need a front-end program to work with industrial strength databases. OpenOffice can open and save in formats compatible with Microsoft Office and other commercial programs, too. If you are using Macintosh computers, get NeoOffice, a version of Open Office designed to run natively on Macs (<http://www.neooffice.org>). No "geek-pertise" needed. These programs are for all of us.

OpenOffice also allows you to create Portable Document Format, or pdf, files, which are readable on any platform using Adobe's free Acrobat Reader program. Perhaps you don't want to use the whole OpenOffice suite but would still like to turn your documents into pdf files so anyone can read them. If you use a Windows machine, try pdfCreator. As its name implies, it's a one trick pony but it does that trick very well. Surf on over to www.sourceforge.net/projects/pdfcreator, download a copy and see what you think. If you use a Mac, you can create a pdf file through the Print menu in any Mac program, including NeoOffice.

There are literally thousands of other Free and/or Open Software programs that do almost anything you can think of - including running an entire library automation system (e.g., Koha - <http://www.koha.org>). In future issues, we'll take a look at programs that let you create web sites easily, help you raise funds and manage volunteers, and lay out a professional looking newsletter or other publication. Or you can take a look around at www.sourceforge.net for yourself and see if someone has already created an application that does just what you want it to - and does it for free.

In these tight budget times, a few minutes invested in exploring Free and/or Open Software could save your library a lot more than pennies.

Public Libraries Run by Solo Librarians: *did you know...*

Solo libraries can be found in all of Maine's 16 Counties:

Androscoggin: 3	Oxford: 10
Aroostook: 4	Penobscot: 7
Cumberland: 8	Piscataquis: 3
Franklin: 6	Sagadahoc: 2
Hancock: 9	Somerset: 7
Kennebec: 3	Waldo: 5
Knox: 7	Washington: 7
Lincoln: 4	York: 11

35%, or 96 out of Maine's 272 public libraries are run by a single librarian. These 96 individuals serve 18% of the state's population (218,898).

Their average annual salary is \$6,111; the average hourly rate of pay for a solo librarian in Maine is \$7.20.

The total print collection in these libraries is 874,492 or 14% of the state total.

Solo libraries had 203,485 visitors (3% of the state total), and 18,672 attended their 1,622 programs.

They circulated 357,336 items (4% of the state total).

The statewide average Municipal Appropriation for libraries is \$92,116. Solo libraries receive an average of \$9,985. Even taking demographics into account, the average service area population of the solo libraries is 2,280; but the average municipal appropriation for Maine libraries serving the 1,000-2,499 Population Category is \$14,190).

Of Maine's 96 solo libraries:

- 17 are run by volunteer librarians.
- 19 are open over 20 hours a week
- 32 are less than 1,000 sq. ft.

This information is generated from the FY05 Maine Public Library Annual Reports and the Maine Public Library Statistics FY05, which can be accessed at: www.maine.gov/msl/lib/statistics/