

- * **What's happening at WMRLS ~ News & Updates from WMRLS Staff**

One copy to each member library

PLEASE ROUTE TO ALL STAFF!

The Last Stop of the Bookmobile

*Mark Makuc, Director of the library in the tiny Berkshire town of Monterey, has written this wonderful reminiscence of the regional library bookmobile. We thank Mark and also the **Monterey News** which graciously allowed us to reprint it.*

One of my earliest memories is of going to the Monterey Library and of Mr. Abercrombie recommending books for me to read. One of my favorite authors was Stephen Meader, who wrote his-

torical fiction full of adventure for young people. The Monterey Library had several of his books, but there were so many more. Mr. Abercrombie promised me that when the bookmobile came he

would be sure to choose any books by Stephen Meader so that I could read them. The wait for the bookmobile was often rewarded by not only books by Meader, but whole shelves of books by authors I had never heard of! I never felt I had read everything in the Monterey Library, but there were times I would wish for something new. The bookmobile would come periodically on Tuesday mornings when the library was open and I was stuck at school. Then one day the bookmobile came when I was out on summer vacation, and I remember being in awe as I was invited by Barbara Morey and Tom Mooney, who began with the book-



©Monterey News Last stop of bookmobile in Monterey, Dec 15, 2009 (photographer Will Marsh)

REGIONAL TRANSITION PROCESS REPORT

Due to the severe budget constraints of FY2011, the Regional Library Systems are engaged in a planning process in order to continue meaningful services to member libraries. A Regional Transition Planning Committee (TransTeam) is preparing recommendations for a future regional structure. At the end of January, the TransTeam issued a progress report which is posted in full on the WMRLS homepage: <http://www.wmrls.org>

Working groups are addressing more specifically Personnel and Staffing, Human Resources, Structure and Locations, and Communications. Three members from each region make up the 18 member TransTeam with ex officio support of MBLC Director Rob Maier, the six regional administrators, and facilitator Linda Braun. WMRLS TransTeam members are Betty Johnson (Colrain, Griswold Memorial Library), Eric Poulin (Greenfield Community College) and Sue San Soucie (Montague Public Libraries). Alternates are Vicky Biancolo (Miss Hall's School) and Lee Fogarty (Springfield City Library).

mobile in the 1950s, to look around. I climbed the steps with reverence as I entered the sacred space. A whole library that came to Monterey for me, and for many others. By that time the Monterey stops had been cut down to just Gould Farm and the library, but in previous years it had stopped at schools, and even private residences. I remember when budget cuts and other issues meant that it could no longer stop at Gould Farm, but we could help out Loul and the others by sharing with them at the library.

The assault on the bookmobile had just begun. Over the years there were many changes—two staff positions, driver and librarian, consolidated to one, who did not even have to be a librarian. The bookmobile that had been based in Pittsfield at the Berkshire Athenaeum was moved to the Pioneer Valley. It came less often, but there were more books, including ones that had the PV designation that meant they would not have been available from Pittsfield. We needed to provide someone to carry the books to be returned out to the truck, and after they were checked in we had to carry the newly chosen ones into the library, where some people would literally be waiting for new materials. The decision by the bookmobile not to carry adult nonfiction hurt, as I especially loved to browse those titles.

There were also happier changes, and I can clearly remember the first day the bookmobile came to town with videotapes! Audio books also became an important

part of the borrowed collection, as the Monterey Library could simply not afford to buy these new types of media.

Bookmobile visits were the perfect chance to catch up on what was happening at the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System (WMRLS) and around the area in other libraries. The bookmobile staff was always willing to come in and look at our library and offer suggestions and advice. Tom came in and took a picture of the candle that had melted when the thermostat malfunctioned so that it resembled an upside down “u” as he told stories about Mr. Abercrombie.

Of course over the years many of our patrons would come and drop in during the bookmobile stop and select things that interested them—Loul Mcintosh, Sherry Colodny, and Anita Worth spent many hours browsing and finding things like scientific books, Civil War anything for Jim, and large print books for an elderly mother. Barbara and Tom, and many of the drivers since, always remembered what types of books our patrons wanted, and for as long as they could read, Shel Fenn got his daily historical fiction book and Bea Fenn had mysteries by the armload.

Over the years many volunteers carried books, from an age when they could barely walk and hold one book to the other end of life, when it was too physically taxing, but that wondrous transfer of the written word was always accomplished with a smile. I often envied the drivers who had the job of bringing such

happiness to every corner of this part of the world, and the stories of skidding in snowstorms and mechanical failures brought to mind the motto of the Post Office.

It has been years since the bookmobile has had a budget to buy new books. The Friends of Western Massachusetts Regional Library System was formed in 2003 to help out after some particularly devastating state cuts to the regional library’s budget, and the first dollars raised bought new materials. Some of you in Monterey participated in the “buy a book to remember a loved one or in place of a gift” program which raised thousands of dollars and made books available to children in our rural area. Last spring the budget was so tight it appeared that the March visit to Monterey was going to be the last ever, but the wizards at WMRLS waved their wands and filled the gas tank for another six months.

At this point in time, WMRLS, which runs the bookmobile program, is being funded at the level they last saw over ten years ago. The budget outlook is so bleak that WMRLS and the other five regions will in all likelihood be dissolved next July. As the governor and the legislature work on the budget over the next six months it will become more clear which library services funded by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners will be cut, which ones will be kept at a reduced funding level, and which ones will be saved. Unfortunately, the first casualty is the bookmobile, one of the last direct survivors of the original pro-

(Continued on page 4)

The budget outlook is so bleak that WMRLS and the other five regions will in all likelihood be dissolved next July

What's Happening at WMRLS

By WMRLS Staff

Continuing Education

One of the many benefits of WMRLS membership is free admission to library continuing education events. Our complete roster of programs for [the spring](#) is now posted online: <http://www.wmrls.org/events>. Register for one - or all - of the following events: Basic Library Techniques in Cataloging (March 30 and April 13), Consumer Health Information (April 7), Project WILD: Environmental Education for Grades K to 12 (April 9 and repeated April 16), Opening Your Feng Shui Eyes in the Library! (May 5 and repeated May 6), and more!

Database News!

The new log-in feature in the Infotrac database allows users to save searches and search results from one session to another. You can also request RSS feeds and search alerts – daily, weekly or monthly. You can even customize your “personal” interface by changing the content tabs to topics of your choice! For more information visit <http://find.galegroup.com/gps/namedUserTutorial.jsp> Questions, comments or concerns? Contact Shirley Keech at 413-665-9898 Ext. 125 or skeech@wmrls.org.

Delivery Enhancements

We are uncertain about many things in our future but one thing we know is that delivery service must continue no matter what. WMRLS is committed to maintaining an efficient and responsive delivery service to our member libraries now and after the merger of regional library systems.

We have bought a used truck to keep the delivery of resources going between libraries in our 4 counties. Our fleet is now 6 trucks large, with 4 of them being big enough to readily accommodate all of the materials that are picked up, sorted and delivered every day on our 5 routes even during those difficult holiday weeks! We thank the Friends of WMRLS for helping to pay for the installation of the racks that our newest truck needed.

Delivery has expanded to the southern Berkshires 4 times a week. The new large truck helps us get to the Berkshires on this added day--larger libraries like Great Barrington, Lee and Sheffield now receive delivery 4 times a week, and smaller ones that are full C/WMARS members like Monterey, New Marlborough and West Stockbridge receive delivery either 3 or 2 times a week.

If you have any questions or comments about delivery please contact Mary King at 413-665-9898 Ext. 117 or mking@wmrls.org.

Directors Essentials

Help for new library directors (or not so new directors) is available on the web. A ‘new director’ may be new to the position, new to Massachusetts, or new to a different type of library. Information crucial to the success of library directors has been compiled into one place <http://directoressentials.org>: articles, documents, and links to websites. The Director Essentials website was created with federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

MARLS Purchasing Cooperative

The FY 2011 MARLS Purchasing Cooperative is in the works! Please watch your email and the WMRLS website for more information. Expect to submit your pledges on or before March 12.

For WMRLS & Member Library News and Updates
Visit the WMRLS-One-Blog: <http://www.wmrls.org/blog>



WMRLS
 PO Box 609
 South Deerfield, MA 01373-0609
 Phone: 413-665-9898
 Fax: 413-665-8877
 Library News & Updates: www.wmrls.org/blog/

Address Service Requested.

NON PROFIT ORG
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 SPRINGFIELD, MASS
 PERMIT NO. 210



This institution is an equal opportunity provider, and employer.

WMRLS Services are provided through state funds administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.



Bookmobile at Corashire School in Monterey, c. 1950 (photographer unknown, courtesy of Monterey Historical Society)

(Continued from page 2)

grams of FDRs Works Progress Administration. The first bookmobile in Massachusetts started in Pittsfield in the 1940s, and the last one will travel the roads of western Massachusetts almost seventy years later. One of the drivers has said that each last stop has been a strange mixture of a wake and a celebration.

Even with joining CWMARS, libraries such as ours will not have big enough budgets to provide browsing collections of audio books and large print titles. WMRLS has committed to lending deposit collections to us for as long as they exist, which may only be another six months. Those books will be delivered by WMRLS vans that come to Monterey twice a week. The Friends of WMRLS, with \$13,000 in privately raised money, recently bought a used van and outfitted it for delivery to replace one of the current vans, which had over three quarter of a million miles. Delivery without WMRLS is bound to change, but it appears that because even the larger libraries have come to depend on interlibrary loans, some sort of delivery service will continue.

I have no idea what my children will remember as magical about their childhood, but I hope they will have something that does for them what the memories of the bookmobile do for me. ~ *Mark Makuc, Library Director, Monterey Library*

*This article is edited and reprinted with the permission of **Monterey News**, December 2009, Volume XXXIX, Number 12, pages 6-7.*