

the news

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Arkansas Among Six States To Receive Funding From Gates

The Arkansas State Library announced February 24 that Arkansas was one of six states awarded a grant from the Gates Library Foundation, with the funds slated to be used to provide libraries in low-income communities with Internet access.

The \$2 million grant, part of a \$20 million package that will aid more than 1,000 libraries in the U.S. and Canada, was the product of an intense application process completed by the ASL. Up to 110 libraries across the state will receive funds for hardware, software, personnel training and technical support, according to State Librarian John A. "Pat" Murphey, Jr.

"Arkansas public libraries that qualify will have access to funds to provide equipment, training and support to enable those libraries to provide Internet access to their patrons. Library users will have access to vast amounts of information that might not otherwise be available," said Murphey.

The grant will be administered by the ASL, explained Murphey, although individual libraries may have to apply directly to the Gates Foundation for funding. Murphey added that he hopes to have more information about the funding method by the end of March or early April.

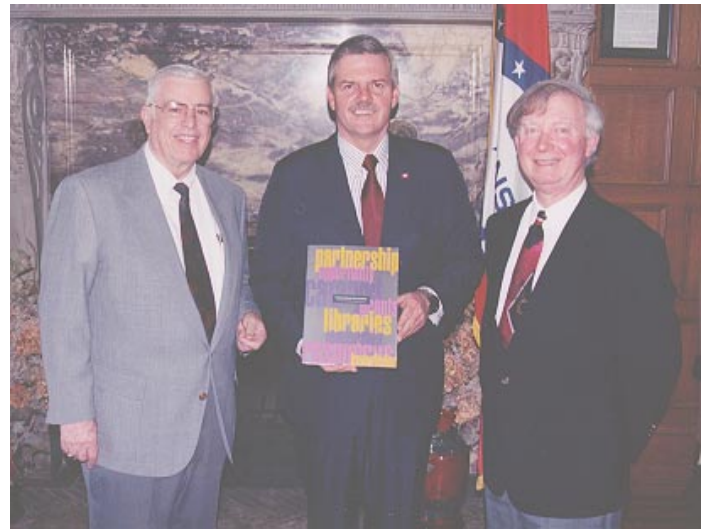
"It may take a few months be-

fore the mechanics of implementation can take place. The Arkansas State Library's role has been to identify the partners in the process," said Murphey. "We provided information in our funding application to the Gates Foundation to help them make their decision."

Bill Gates, chief executive officer of Microsoft, and his wife Melinda, the co-founders of the Gates Library Foundation, announced the grants February 24 from Alabama, where the foundation initiated its pilot program for state funding. The program, when completed, will provide 95 percent of that state's libraries with new computers, software, technical support and training.

Arkansas joined Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico and West Virginia in statewide partnerships with the Gates foundation. To be considered for such a grant, states had to have a poverty rate of at least 19 percent based on the 1990 U.S. census.

The Louisiana State Library received the largest grant, \$3.5 million,



State Librarian John A. "Pat" Murphey, Jr. (left) and Associate Director for Library Services/Development Jack Mulkey (right) join Lieutenant Governor Winthrop P. Rockefeller in announcing the Gates Library Foundation grant to the state.

while the Mississippi Library Commission and the West Virginia Library Commission were each awarded \$2.5 million and the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives \$2 million. The New Mexico State Library received \$1.25 million.

The grant is aimed at Arkansas rural public libraries, particularly those in the Delta region, according to Mary Ann Littlefield, the ASL's grants coordinator. Many of those libraries do not have computers and, depending on their size, could get from two to four workstations, Littlefield added.

Hughes The Delight Of Delight

Regular patrons may not recognize the Delight City Library the next time they drop in to check out a book. It's not because the library has moved, it's still located in the Russell LP Gas Co. building on Antioch Street, the town's thoroughfare. It's not much bigger than it was when it first opened in 1957, although the collection has increased in size significantly.

The casual observer may not notice it, but there's something missing from the library, something more important than any book or periodical. That "something" is Odell Hughes, who retired in January after 40 years as the library's one and only employee.

A native of Delight, Hughes, 87, went to work for Russell LP Gas in 1956 after the death of her husband, Doyle. The company's bookkeeper, Hughes was approached by her supervisor about running the library that Russell had volunteered to house. Hughes took on the challenge despite having no experience in the library field.

"I didn't have any college hours

(in library science). I was just checking books in and out at first and I learned from experience," she said.

When it first opened, the library consisted of only 75 books on a few shelves donated by the gas company. Hughes relied on monthly visits from a bookmobile and, later, assistance from the Hempstead County Library in Hope to provide her patrons with requested reading materials. Now a part of the Southwest Arkansas Regional Library System, the Delight facility has grown to include some 6,000 books and a number of periodicals in its collection. None of them, however, are more important to the library than the woman who spent 40 years teaching patrons young and old the importance of reading.



Odell Hughes was honored with a party at the Delight City Library when she retired in January.

"I'll miss the contact with the people," admitted Hughes, who will be replaced by another Hughes employee, Shirley Forbes. Hughes' retirement plans include spending more time with her four children and, of course, reading. "I'm still going to go down to the library and get books but it won't be the same."

Deadline For State Funding For Construction April 3

The deadline for public libraries to apply for state funding for construction is April 3. All applications received by that date will be reviewed by a committee composed of Arkansas State Library Board members, ASL staff and public librarians.

The committee's recommendations will be passed on to the State Library Board at its June 4th meeting, at which time the board is expected to decide how to award the \$500,000 provided by Act 1356 of 1997. The act

calls for grants up to \$150,000 to be awarded to public libraries to cover construction costs that include renovation, remodeling, expansion and work to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Act 1356 requires that any funding awarded be matched "dollar for dollar," said Mary Ann Little field, the ASL's grants coordinator, adding that the matching funds can come from sources such as city or county endowments or gifts.



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ASL To Unveil 'ArkStar' April 20

On April 20, the Arkansas State Library will unveil its new automated circulation system, dubbed "ArkStar." The premiere of the system, designed to improve the efficiency of the library's service to the public, will include a reception at 2:30 p.m. that is expected to draw many of the state's leading government officials.

The system will open several new avenues to the ASL, according to Associate Director for Library Services/Development Jack Mulkey. The ASL's catalog will be accessible through the library's website, said Mulkey, "which means that for the first time, without even coming into the State Library, people will be able to see what's in our collection." The system will include an online catalog that patrons will be able to access via terminals in the ASL. "(Manual) card catalogs are expensive, cumbersome and usually not up to date due to the manhours they require. An

online catalog can be updated immediately."

Another new innovation is the ASL's library cards, which will be required to check out books beginning April 21. The circulation staff will begin distributing the cards to patrons on that date, asking those applying for cards to provide a driver's license and proof of their current address.

The new system will also make it easier for patrons unacquainted with library technology to find titles and items of interest. "They can dial in from home or they can do keyword searches on the library's terminals," said Mary Leckie, the ASL's State Library Services coordinator. "You don't have to know how something is filed to find it with the computer. You can type in an author's name, or a certain type of book, and find the information easily."

"In very practical terms, it means

that a patron looking for information but unsure of the precise heading can explore several headings in the time that it used to take to look at one," said State Librarian John A. "Pat" Murphey, Jr.

Besides eliminating the need for paper records, the system will also allow the public access to all periodicals and government documents housed in the ASL, added Leckie, whose staff has been busy learning the system's intricacies for the past several months.

The fact that the system is being unveiled during National Library Week is no coincidence, Mulkey explained, but rather the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the ASL's latest technological advances. "It brings us in line with the newest library practices," said Mulkey. "And it puts us in good shape for going into the year 2000."

159 Turn Out For Workshop

The Arkansas State Library's Children's Services Workshop drew a total of 159 attendees on the 20th anniversary of the event, held March 6 at the Arkansas 4-H Center in Little Rock.

A review of evaluation forms distributed among the librarians in attendance yielded the highest marks for the workshop's main presenter, Margaret Read MacDonald of Seattle. "They appreciated the fact that she's a practicing librarian, not an academician even though she's a Ph.D.," said Library Program Advisor Cathy Howser of the ASL's Extension Services. "And she incorporated storytelling in her work. Her whole approach is a practical base, and she's a really good

storyteller."

MacDonald presented four general-session offerings to assist children's librarians, "From Teller to Teller," "The Art of the Folktale Picture Book," "Playing With Story" and "Splash Stories - More Playing With Story." The day-long event's breakout sessions were: "A Rookie's Guide to Story Time," presented by Louise Turner; "Is There Life After Goosebumps? Book Discussion Groups for 4th-6th Graders," Kay Taylor, Maybelle James and Donna Rolland; "Come On In - The Water Is Fine: 1998 Summer Reading Sub-



Margaret Read MacDonald of the King County Library System in Seattle, Wash., autographs one of her books for a librarian during a break at the Children's Services Workshop.

theme Ideas," Kathy Wright, Ann Lightsey and Judy Beth Clevenger; and "Hot Topics," Mary Furlough and Sharon Christian.

More Funds Available

Libri Foundation Announces Grants

A total of 25 libraries in Arkansas received grants from the Libri Foundation in January as part of the group's Mississippi Delta Books for Children project. All of the libraries were awarded \$700 based on their 2-to-1 matching requests, providing them with \$1,050 to spend on children's books.

The libraries that received the grants were: Woodruff County Library in Augusta; Arlene Cherry Memorial Library in Cabot; Carlisle Public Library; Monroe County Library in Clarendon; Dermott Branch Library; Des Arc Public Library; DeValls Bluff Public Library; Dumas Branch Library; Hazen Public Library; Holly Grove School Library; Imboden

Branch Library; Lake Village Branch Library; Lonoke Elementary School Library; Lonoke Primary School Library Media Center; Marjorie Walker McCrary Memorial Library in Lonoke; McGehee Branch Library; Monticello Branch Library; Oil Trough Elementary School Library; Clay County Central Elementary School Library in Hector; Star City Branch Library; Clary Elementary Library in Stuttgart; Tuckerman Elementary School Library; Delta Branch Library in Wilmot; and Cross County Library in Wynne.

A total of 39 additional grants will be awarded by the foundation to Delta libraries in Arkansas in April. The deadline for entries is April 10;

librarians needing application forms should contact Barbara McKillip, the foundation's president, at P.O. Box 10246, Eugene, OR 97440. Her phone number is (541) 485-8532 and her fax number is (541) 485-9688. Applications can also be provided by Carolyn Ashcraft of the Arkansas State Library's Extension Services.

The Books for Children project is open to all rural public libraries as well as all rural public school libraries located in the 26-county Delta region of Arkansas. Libraries should be located in small, rural communities with a population under 10,000, have a limited budget and an active children's department.

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