

# the news

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An Arkansas State Library Publication

## Gates Brings ASL Group To Seattle

### GCTA Provides Training Aimed To Help Librarians

At the invitation of the Gates Center for Technology Access, a group from the Arkansas State Library traveled to Seattle the first week in February to get an insider's view on the computers many of the state's public libraries will soon be installing, courtesy of a \$4 million grant from the Gates Library Initiative.

Five members of the ASL staff, including Carolyn Ashcraft and Jane Thompson of Extension Services and Darrell Fitts and Sally Hawkes of Library Network Services, as well as Jay Harton of the Department of Information Systems, received four days of intensive training on the computers and their software offerings. Much of the time was devoted to hands-on demonstrations of the various aspects of the computers, with periods allotted to explain the intricacies of the hardware and all that goes along with it. Held in GCTA's temporary offices in Seattle's City Centre, the training sessions covered much of what the state's public librarians will be dealing with in the coming months as they introduce the public-access computers to their patrons as well as maintenance and ad-



Carolyn Ashcraft of the ASL meets with the GCTA's Anna Leavitt at the group's Seattle office.

ministration of the workstations.

"(GCTA) realized that even though they are the ones who run the help desk and install the computers, we are the ones who are going to be getting the first calls" from librarians with questions about the computers, said Ashcraft. "We'll be doing some hand-holding, and then telling them to not be afraid to call Gates, they're very nice people."

The group was given an overview of GCTA and its role in bringing computers to public libraries throughout North America, done in partnership with the Gates Library Initiative (GLI), which plans to provide more than 9,500 public libraries in the United States with computers by 2003. Arkansas is one of six states currently involved in a statewide partnership with the GLI, all of which are receiving training and technical support along with the computers as part of the grant program.

The first day also saw the group receive training on working models of the computers GCTA recently began

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## Consultants Set To Hold Survey Of Librarians

Himmel & Wilson, a Wisconsin-based husband and wife team of library consultants, will begin conducting a four-month study of Arkansas libraries beginning in March. Funded by state Act 600 of 1997, the study is designed to ensure that Arkansans receive high-quality library services well into the 21st century.

Ethel Himmel and Bill Wilson will kick off the study, slated to be completed by June, with focus groups to be held at 16 locations throughout the state. The meetings, to take place March 2-17, will allow the consultants to learn about the state of library service in Arkansas, the issues important to librarians as well as patrons, and funding resources available to the state's libraries. Two sessions will be held at most locations, with one designed with librarians in mind and a second geared strictly toward trustees and Friends of the Library groups.

"We're going to start by looking at what people perceive as the strengths and weakness of their libraries, and then we'll go into what they view as their shortcomings, what they're lacking in resources to serve the public," said Himmel. "The overall picture is what we want is for them to talk about their libraries and what's important to them."

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# Hubener Finds Home In Helena

It took him more than 40 years to do it, but Hal Hubener has finally found his way back to Arkansas.

Born in Blytheville 49 years ago, Hubener, the new director of the Phillips-Lee-Monroe Library system in Helena, left the state when he was only 3, moving to Baltimore and eventually Florida. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree as well as a master's in English from the University of Florida before attending Florida State, where he got his master's in library science.

Entering the library profession with his MLS, Hubener began a stint at the Florida State Archives in the Florida State Library in Tallahassee, leaving there to become the special collections librarian for the Lakeland (Fla.) Public Library, a post he held for 10 years. Arkansas, however, always held a special place in the heart of Hubener, who has relatives in Little

Rock and Jonesboro. When the position at Phillips-Lee-Monroe became available with the resignation of Cynthia Slade, Hubener saw it as an opportunity to return to his roots.

"I wanted to try something different, a new direction in librarianship in a new location," said Hubener about the move from Florida, his home for 42 years. "I knew I wanted something in the South and in a rural area, and this looked like just what I was looking for."

Hubener, who took over for Slade the first week of December, found himself very busy early on, dealing not only with compiling the library's annual report but with the installation of new public-access computers, the result of a grant from the Gates Library Initiative. Still, he believes it is important to make time to get to know the area and its people better.

"I want to have a strong personal presence in the community," said Hubener, who has been meeting with local civic groups in an attempt to make them more aware of what the library has to offer them. "In a small town, people need to know the library and its staff and to know it has an important role."

One of Hubener's immediate concerns is the library system's summer reading program for children. Thanks to local funding, he has plans to expand the program to include more high-quality entertainment, puppets, storytellers, etc., in an effort to raise the cultural awareness of the youth.

He also has specific plans for the new public-access computers, with two earmarked for the Phillips County Library, another two going to the West

Helena Public Library and another going to each branch in Elaine and Marvell. Younger patrons should find the computers highly useful, Hubener explained, with the variety of youth-oriented software they offer as well as access to the Internet. "We want people to get in here and show them what we've got."

Hubener hasn't had any trouble adjusting to his change of scenery, trading the humid climes of Florida for the colorful surroundings of eastern Arkansas. "For one thing, you've got four seasons here, which we don't in Florida," said Hubener, a history buff who is enjoying learning about the roles played by Native Americans and blues musicians in shaping the area's past. "I was quite taken with the community when I came here. I walk down the street and I'm already on a first-name basis with a lot of folks. In a larger city you don't get that, but here people go out of their way to meet you."

## Funds Made Available For Local Planning Studies

As part of a statewide study designed to improve the service of Arkansas' public libraries, the State Library Board has approved the use of \$35,000 to provide seven grants of \$5,000 each to libraries to conduct local studies and planning. The study is funded by Act 600 of 1997.

Applications for planning grants from the Arkansas State Library will be accepted by Extension Services between March 1 and April 16, 1999. The State Library Board will review and select applications to be funded at its regular quarterly meeting in May.

For applications and further information, contact Extension Services' Carolyn Ashcraft at (501) 682-5288.



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## ALA PAC Legislative Day February 15, 1999



Sen. Wayne Dowd (left) makes a point to Southwest Arkansas Regional Library's Ray Tromater during the luncheon.



Kathy Sanders of UALR's Ottenheimer Library, with Rep. Jim Lendall, was one of more than 50 librarians on hand for a luncheon held at the Arkansas State Library during the Arkansas Library Association Political Action Committee's Legislative Day.

**GATES** continued from Page 1 installing in libraries in southern Arkansas, the first step in a process that will eventually cover virtually the entire state. Jennifer Lucas of the GCTA staff explained the various user profiles available, color-coordinated to allow library staff to recognize what profile is in use simply by the color of the computer's "wallpaper." Karen Mooseker, GCTA's logistics manager, addressed purchasing concerns and training arrangements for the state's librarians while Chris Toney dealt with the program's help desk and the technical support it will provide to those libraries participating in the program.

The next day was reserved for training on computer administration, with GCTA's Meg Rheingold illustrating the importance of Windows NT, the operating system of all of the computers the Gates groups is installing. "When you put a Windows 95 computer into a library, you're making that a sacrifice machine because you're going to get broken into," said Rheingold, who explained that Windows NT is both "accessible and intuitive" but allows libraries to offer public-access computers that are "unhackable."

Sean Neely and Lora Morgaine's afternoon session centered on integrating the Gates computers with online catalogs while Gabrielle Kirsch established the importance of making the computers accessible to patrons with disabilities, whose needs can be met by the introduction of tools such as a voice synthesizer or a Braille reader.

The Wednesday morning session covered networking, with GCTA's Jessica Dorr discussing the strengths of a network and its components, with an eye toward trying to resolve possible problems librarians may encounter with their computers. Lucas later provided an abbreviated explanation of the various software applications available on the computers, reference and research tools such as Encarta Africana and Encarta Virtual Globe that should prove highly beneficial to patrons and librarians alike.

That afternoon the ASL group was given a tour of the GCTA office, located only a short distance from Puget Sound. Of particular interest to the group was the GCTA help desk, which has several working models of the library computer on hand to be able to better serve the needs of librarians.

The last day of training gave the

group a chance to examine ways libraries can best use websites, such as distributing information on community events. Kirsch demonstrated two tools for creating websites, HTML and FrontPage Explorer, with an emphasis on graphic manipulation. The last half of the day was devoted to help-desk issues, with Toney examining the range of questions GCTA is prepared to handle. "We want librarians to know who to call, when to call and why we're the ones they should always call first" with questions about their computers, said Toney.

Ashcraft expects to be in touch with the GCTA staff throughout the installation process and beyond, providing them with "our impressions as to how things are going in the state." She feels the training she received in Seattle will allow her and her staff to quell any fears librarians may have about the Gates program. "We now have a better understanding of the hardware and software that's going to be put out in those libraries and how these computers are going to be an asset to them. For a lot of these folks, it's going to be the first computer they've ever had and they're a little afraid of the technology."

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### **SURVEY** continued from Page 1

After the focus groups are completed, Himmel and Wilson will begin holding individual interviews with library directors and supporters, looking at their staff, collections and facilities, “anything that contributes to the capacity of libraries to provide service,” said Wilson. The duo plans to spend some time in April interviewing staff members of the Arkansas State Library in an effort to get a grasp of the library’s role in serving the state’s libraries. The interviews will be followed up with a mail survey to all of the public libraries and their branches.

The group expects to begin posting preliminary information from their research on their website, <http://www.execpc.com/himmel>, beginning in May. They plan to hold an open forum on their findings in May at a site

yet to be determined before turning over their completed assessment to the Arkansas State Library Board in June. “It’s really important for us that everyone has a chance to pick at things before it becomes official,” said Himmel.

#### **The proposed Arkansas focus group schedule:** **MARCH 2**

*Forrest City Public Library*  
2-4 p.m., Librarians  
6:30-8:30 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library  
*Texarkana Public Library*  
2-4 p.m., Librarians

#### **MARCH 3**

*Phillips-Lee-Monroe Library, Helena*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
6:30-8:30 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library  
*Barton Library, El Dorado*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
6:30-8:30 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library

#### **MARCH 4**

*Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Library*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarian  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library  
*CLOC Regional Library*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library

#### **MARCH 5**

*Southeast Arkansas Regional Library, Monticello*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library

*Saline County Library, Benton*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library  
(To be held at Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, 102 S. Main)

#### **MARCH 8**

*White River Regional Library, Batesville*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library  
*Pope County Library, Russellville*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
6:30-8:30 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library

#### **MARCH 9**

*Crowley Ridge Regional Library, Jonesboro*  
10 a.m.-noon, Trustees and Friends of the Library  
2-4 p.m., Librarians  
*Faulkner/Van Buren Regional Library, Conway*  
10 a.m.-12 p.m., Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library

#### **MARCH 10**

*Northeast Arkansas Regional Library, Paragould*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
*Laman Library, North Little Rock*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library

#### **MARCH 15**

*North Arkansas Regional Library, Harrison*  
10 a.m.-12 p.m., Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library

#### **MARCH 16**

Visits to independent libraries in NW Arkansas

#### **MARCH 17**

*Ozarks Regional Library, Fayetteville*  
10 a.m.-noon, Librarians  
2-4 p.m., Trustees and Friends of the Library  
(To be held at Springdale Public Library, 1205 W. Maple)

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