

the news

An Arkansas State Library Publication

Gates Grant Could Double In Size

The \$2 million grant Arkansas' public libraries will be receiving from the Gates Library Foundation, aimed at providing Internet access to communities throughout North America, may be closer to \$4 million, according to a foundation representative.

Richard G. Akeroyd, Jr., library programs director of the Gates Library Foundation, was in Little Rock May 13-14 to meet with members of the Arkansas State Library staff and discuss details of the grant, awarded February 24. Akeroyd was accompanied by Willem Scholten, president of Technology Resource Institute, a Seattle, Washington-based



Willem Scholten (left) and Richard Akeroyd look over a map of state. computer consulting and training organization.

The \$2 million to be awarded to Arkansas, part of a \$20 million package donated to libraries across the United States, is actually worth twice that amount, Akeroyd explained, when factoring in the costs of developing re-

gional training centers and the software donated by Microsoft. Microsoft's chief executive officer Bill Gates and his wife, Melinda, formed the Gates Library Foundation in June 1997 to bring access to computers and digital information to patrons in financially disadvantaged areas of the U.S. and Canada.

"There's definite value in the amount of technology and training support provided," said Akeroyd, who expects to see as many as four or five regional training hubs installed in public libraries across the state that will aid librarians in learning how to better serve their patrons in the Digital Age.

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Hot Spring County Library Suffers Devastating Fire

It took a little more than an hour to destroy 28 years of hard work by Director Mary Cheatham when the Hot Spring County Library was destroyed by a fire on April 27.

Reported by a newspaper carrier around 1 a.m., the fire, sparked by lightning that struck the library's roof, was brought under control by 2:30 a.m. but not before it had consumed most of the two-story blond-brick building. Almost everything in the 18,000-square-foot structure was destroyed except for books and items in the library's Arkansas Room, office

and basement.

Rain caused considerable damage to everything that wasn't burned, admitted Cheatham, who arrived on the scene minutes after the fire was reported. "The storm was pretty intense, people were at home listening to their scanners and they called us as soon as they heard the report," said Cheatham, who praised the bravery exhibited by the Malvern Fire Department in trying to prevent what was ultimately a total loss. "The smoke was so bad and the wind was blowing



Sunlight shines through what was once the ceiling of the Hot Spring County Library.

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ArkStar Shines At State Library



Diana Minor serves punch at a reception held April 20 unveiling the library's automated circulation system, dubbed "ArkStar."



State Librarian Pat Murphey (center) and ASL Board members Violet Isaacs (left) and Lawanda Dale officially kick off the reception. (Right) Reference Librarian Debbie Hall demonstrates the new system for onlookers.



Violet Isaacs signs her new borrower card with the ASL's Mary Leckie.



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State Librarian
..... John A. "Pat" Murphey, Jr.

Associate Director for Library Services/Development
..... Jack Mulkey

Deputy Director for Information Resources
..... Jenelle Stephens

Deputy Director for Administration
..... Kathryn M. Smith

Information Officer/Editor/Photographer
..... Tim Taylor

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it so...when daylight came, we knew that it was going to be bad.”

Cheatham estimates the damage at \$3 million, including the structure and the books lost, \$630,000 of which was covered by insurance. Some 600 reels of microfilm and 420 reels of 16mm film were recovered and restored by Stroud Service Co. of North Little Rock at a cost of \$7,396. Some 3,000 books were salvaged and turned over to Disaster Recovery Service of Fort Worth Texas, who cleaned the books for \$10,850.

Around 7,000 books were checked out at the time of the fire, Cheatham added, 1,200 of which have since been returned. In all, some

53,000 volumes were lost, although an exact number cannot be determined because the library's inventory records were destroyed.

Cheatham, who has been the library's director since 1970, and her staff haven't let the disaster get the best of them. They've been busy cleaning what little furniture remains usable as well as processing the numerous donations they have received since the fire, coming from such varied sources as Sen. David Pryor and local businesses.

“The library community has been so heartwarming and generous,” said Cheatham, pointing to the contributions her library has received from groups such as the Faulkner County

notes.”

Akeroyd went on to say that the amount of hardware libraries may receive will depend on the size of the populations they serve, although all computers will serve a variety of needs, from desktop publishing to accounting and educational needs. He added that the Gates organization will be recruiting Arkansans seeking their master's degrees in library science over the next few months to assist in the training that librarians will need in fully understanding the complexities of the computer systems.

The fact that every public library in Arkansas is eligible for funding under the Gates plan means a significant advance for the state as a whole, according to Jack Mulkey, the ASL's Associate Director for Library Services/Development. “In the 12 years that I have worked for the State Library, this is by far the most exciting project that we have participated in,” said Mulkey. “And it will produce the most dramatic impact.”

Friends of the Library, which donated \$1,000. The Central Arkansas Library System donated \$2,500 to the cause, a week's worth of overdue book fines.

The Arkansas State Library provided 1,000 children's titles as well the services of a preservation specialist, Tom Claeson of AMIGOS Bibliographic Inc., who assisted with the clean-up. The University of Central Arkansas' Torreyson Library contributed an additional 1,500 children's books.

“Some people are waiting to see where the money needs to go,” said Cheatham, whose greatest needs at the moment are shelves and children's books.

Much of what was saved came from the Arkansas Room, material devoted to the history of Hot Spring County along with an extensive genealogy collection, most of it removed within hours of the fire. “Our salvation was the volunteers and the men working out of the jail doing community service,” admitted Cheatham. “We were able to save more things because of them, because the staff couldn't have done all that.”

The Hot Spring County Library Board decided May 21 to move the library into a temporary location located in downtown Malvern. Cheatham was authorized to sign a one-year lease on a former clothing store at 301 S. Main St. Cheatham, who has been supervising a book processing center at the Malvern Mini Storage, hopes to have the library open for the public by mid-June.

Cash donations to the Hot Spring County Library can be made to any Malvern bank, all of which have set up funds for the library. Any other donations can be mailed to the library's former address, 202 E. 3rd, Malvern, AR 72104.

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Those hubs would include 10 personal computers and an additional teaching computer, according to Scholten, and would provide hands-on technical classes for librarians involved in the Gates program.

The sites of the training hubs, as well as the funding process behind the grant, remains in the hands of the Gates organization, explained State Librarian John A. “Pat” Murphey, Jr. Geography will play a major role in placing the hubs, according to Akeroyd, as will the location of a grants workshop the foundation will hold. Tentatively set for early August, the day-long event will detail for the state's librarians the process of applying for grants from the GLF.

“Our goal is to expand public access to computer facilities and the Internet,” said Akeroyd, who served 11 years as the State Librarian of Connecticut. “We want to make a significant impact in closing the gap between the information haves and the have-

WWII Program Planned

The Saline County Library was one of 20 libraries selected to host a film and discussion program designed to study the American experience in World War II.

"From Rosie To Roosevelt: A Film History of Americans in World War II" is a cooperative effort of National Video Resources and the American Library Association's Public Program Office, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and supported by the John D. and Catherine McArthur Foundation. It is the first NEH-funded project to focus on documentary films as the main text for scholar-led discussion.

The Saline County program will run for six consecutive Tuesday

nights, from Sept. 8 to Oct. 13 beginning at 6:30 p.m. and will be held at the library headquarters in Benton. Leading the discussion each night will be Dr. Martin James, a professor of political science at Henderson State University.

Veterans of World War II, as well as those from more recent wars, find it difficult to discuss their battle experiences, according to Saline County Director Julie Hart. As the veterans get older and eventually die, it becomes increasingly difficult to find those with firsthand experience of the tragedies of war, Hart explained. "We're losing that historical record. That's one of the reasons this appealed to me," said Hart.

MLS Classes Set For Texarkana

The University of North Texas and Texas Women's University are teaming up to offer a cooperative master's of library science degree via video conferencing at Texas A&M University - Texarkana.

Classes are scheduled to begin this fall in Texarkana, one of four sites in Texas that will host the video conferencing. Students will take two courses per semester on Saturdays via interactive television from UNT and TWU and will also take elective courses at TAMU - Texarkana.

For more information on the classes, contact Herman Totten of the University of North Texas at (940) 565-3567 or Keith Swigger of Texas Women's University at (940) 898-2602.

Arkansas State Library
One Capitol Mall
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