



I Love My  
Librarian!  
2013 Award

**Nominations for: Molly E.K. Ledermann**

Reference Librarian  
Missoula Public Library  
Missoula, Mont.

**Nominator: Caroline Reel**

**1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets him/her apart?**

Molly Ledermann is industrious, cheerful, and resourceful. She is an excellent reference librarian, skilled collaborator, and thoughtful innovator. Throughout her tenure, she has provided countless new opportunities for learning and widespread community for the residents of rural Montana.

To every facet of her work, Molly brings tremendous creativity and a spirit of collaboration and fun. Throughout, she inspires everyone around her to do his or her best. It is a joy to have her here in Montana.

In this nomination, questions are answered, in turn, by the following individuals: Caroline Reel, library patron; Katie Stanton, Marketing and Communications Director, Missoula Art Museum; Karl Olson, Development Director, Foundation for the Missoula Public Library; and Barbara Theroux, President of The Friends of Missoula Public Library.

**2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and made your experience of the library a positive one.**

Caroline Reel, Patron: Molly is, quite simply, the best reference librarian I've ever met. She brings an invaluable approach to customer service—her most common word being “yes.” She puts patrons first, going the extra mile to get them the service and information they need. I know this personally, for Molly has gone the distance to help me with research for work, home, and school, finding information that quite simply, no one else could, by delving into the most distant and obscure of sources. Through her influence, I have become a more thorough researcher.

As I have gotten to know Molly better, I have also learned about her efforts to make the library a friendlier place, from the patron's perspective. For instance, when the library underwent a redesign of the reference area, Molly was adamant that the library create a space for patrons to interact with the librarian, face-to-face. Now, the reference desk is a place where I can sit down and have a great conversation.

Molly has also improved the library's accessibility. On Saturdays, I can now check out books at our local farmer's market, where Molly was instrumental in setting up a bookmobile. While there, I can also pore through cookbooks or look up information about the vegetables I've bought for dinner. Just as enjoyable, I've seen people sign up for their first library card and check out their first book.

Molly has also improved access to the library through technology. Because of her efforts, I have better access to the library via smart phone. On the library website, I frequently make use of the

online chat reference feature (instigated by Molly) and enjoy checking out the online events calendar filled with events she has coordinated. Molly recently made it possible for participants to register for classes and events online. With her innovations, the website has become much more useful and fun.

Thanks to Molly, the library is also more inclusive. As a Spanish language learner, I am delighted by Molly's efforts to bring bilingualism into the library. She was behind the effort to incorporate Spanish language onto signs and invited Missoula's Spanish Conversation Group to use the library's meeting spaces. More and more, the library is feeling like a place that belongs to everyone and is open and welcoming to all.

If this were not enough, Molly inspires with her love of literature, which pervades the library. She not only founded the library's book club, but also is always ready to recommend a great new title to enhance my long road trips across the state. And the nonfiction collection Molly has assembled is excellent—it is thought to be as good as what can be found in New York City or Chicago, all because of her assiduous research. Thanks to Molly's recommendations, I have read more widely, trying out books that I would never normally have read, and my reading is incredibly enriched.

In short, Molly has made the library a much more welcoming, accessible, inclusive, and inspiring place to be—and a place I love to go. During her tenure, she has transformed my experience of research, reading, and the Missoula Public Library as a whole. I cannot thank her enough.

### **3. How has the librarian made a difference in the community? Please be specific.**

Katie Stanton, Marketing and Communications Director, Missoula Art Museum: Molly's unlimited curiosity has led to community programming that links contemporary art to the art of the written word. She has produced programs that unite the Missoula Art Museum (MAM) and the Missoula Public Library as community partners for the benefit of the people in our community.

Through Molly, MAM and the Missoula Public Library have worked together to support each institution's community initiatives. MAM has partnered with the library on three of Missoula's biggest educational outreach programs in the last five years. Two of these programs were "The Big Read: The Maltese Falcon" and "The Big Read: My Antonia." These two programs were spearheaded by Molly. The third collaborative project was for MAM's exhibition entitled "Ansel Adams: A Legacy."

For "The Big Read: The Maltese Falcon," Molly worked with MAM to schedule events that were free to the public, conveniently scheduled, and multifaceted. They include one "Maltese Falcon" film screening and lecture, one documentary screening, one art theft lecture, and one teen art class. The guidelines suggested by Molly to MAM were intended to target a wide range of audiences: teenagers, engaged and un-engaged art-lovers, and readers both avid and reluctant. The Big Read was also incorporated into MAM's Fall/Winter 2010 Fifth Grade Art Experience, a 20-year-long partnership program that reaches 1,200 fifth grade students in Missoula County and the surrounding area. Molly's ability to guide and create programming, in addition to her ability to coordinate and visualize the "big picture," benefited all demographic segments (served and underserved) of the Missoula community.

During the brainstorming session with Molly for "The Big Read: My Antonia," she suggested that MAM create an exhibition that paralleled "My Antonia." MAM was able to create "Lois Conner: Montana Prairie," black-and-white photographs taken by a world-renowned photographer in Western Montana. With this in mind, Molly recommended related programming for MAM to host. She also

was able to fuse another Missoula organization into the partnership by inviting "Festival of the Book" author Sarah Carter to speak about her title, "Montana Women Homesteaders." Then, the film "Heartland" was screened, and a discussion and reception were also held with the filmmakers. The third educational outreach element was a lecture and reception for artist Kristi Hager who spoke on "Promoting Empty Spaces."

Molly also suggested MAM display artworks portraying the prairie within the library. She coordinated the use of several library display cases in which photographs of prairies and corresponding documentation were shown. She also organized the placement of supporting literature that complemented the exhibition, and "My Antonia" was placed in the front area of library for visitors to check out. Molly's amazing coordination talents enable her to combine elements from different genre for a cohesive presentation. It is wonderful that she is able to do this, but astounding to think that the MAM is but one piece in the much larger, community-outreach project that is The Big Read. Molly performs this coordination feat with dozens of schools, bookstores, businesses, and more.

Molly selected three films to support MAM's exhibition "Ansel Adams: A Legacy." They were shown at the library and attracted a larger-than-normal, engaged, and interested film audience. She also coordinated the placement of literature that complemented the exhibition and was placed in the front area of library for visitors to check out. Molly coordinated MAM's use of a library display case in which period cameras, other antique photographic equipment, and reproduced Ansel Adams images were shown. The combination of these three elements increased the community's awareness about photography, Ansel Adams, MAM, and nature conservancy. With Molly's guidance, Missoula Public Library's participation in "Ansel Adams: A Legacy" provided the museum with new visitors who would not have known about the exhibition or the museum and a community that came together to support the incredible natural resources that Montanans take great pride in.

Molly has a superior ability to encourage, create, and connect outreach programming within a community that is not often found in one person, let alone within an organization. Her abilities as a resource coordinator create a synergistic effect that produces more than simply a collection of the individual elements. Molly's talents promote the mission of the Missoula Public Library and partnered organizations to generate enhanced experiences and education for the Missoula community.

Throughout, Molly provided MAM with opportunities to become involved in larger-scale, educational community outreach programs. She challenged us to think large and collaboratively.

#### **4. How has the library, and the nominee, improved the quality of your life?**

Karl Olson, Development Director, Foundation for the Missoula Public Library: Molly's tenure at Missoula Public Library (MPL) has ushered the biggest and most dynamic programming advances the library has seen in many years. Her leadership in the semi-annual "Big Read" is an iconic example of her ability to create some of Missoula's greatest literary events. Thousands of individuals in our community have participated in MPL's Big Read activities since 2009.

In 2009, Molly co-directed a "Pre-Big-Read"—a community-wide reading event devoted to Harper Lee and "To Kill a Mockingbird." "Inside Mockingbird" drew 625 participants and emphasized the novel's take on gender, economics, and Gothic style, rounding out academic themes with live Depression-era jazz and Southern food tasting. It inspired participants to get out of their stereotype or mold, generating powerful teen poetry and readings.

Next in 2010, Molly wrote a successful grant for, then directed, the library's first official "Big Read" program, funded through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The project, based on Dashiell Hammett's "The Maltese Falcon," drew over 60 organizations and 5,600 active program participants. Events explored the novel, Hammett, and the noir genre through art, music, lectures, exhibitions, workshops, discussions, and even an historical walking tour.

In 2011, Molly again wrote a successful grant application and then served for the NEA's 2012 "Big Read." This time around, the book was "My Antonia," which spoke to many in Montana, with its topics of rural life and homesteading. The library's new "Web on Wheels" bus made it possible to bring books and programs into rural communities across the county for the first time. In total, the project brought together 54 organizations and 30 schools, included 37 public programs, and distributed over 2000 copies of "My Antonia" across the county. Many participants shared stories about their own personal or family histories growing up on homesteads in rural Montana.

We have all benefited from Molly's methodical work ethic and creative flair. For instance, she was the professional librarian behind MPL's ground-breaking "Out at the Library" LGBT Literary Festival in 2008, which highlighted the library's role as a cultural home for people of all backgrounds. The traveling exhibit, created by San Francisco Public Library, entailed five weeks of programming focused on regional lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) history, literature and culture. An estimated 3,000 individuals took in the exhibit, with 500 people attending events, and people came from across Montana and Idaho. The event got conversation going, and a blog (mediated by the library) generated amazing opportunities for discussion.

I count myself as one whose life is enhanced, personally and directly, by Molly's friendly expertise. And the Foundation for Missoula Public Library (which I work for), always attracted to Molly's proven success, has never hesitated to sign on as a funding partner for Molly's cutting-edge projects.

## **5. How does the nominee make the library a better place?**

Barbara Theroux, President of The Friends of Missoula Public Library: I love Molly. She is energetic and organized. She is a wife and mother. She is involved in her community. And she is a reference librarian at Missoula Public Library! As president of The Friends of Missoula Public Library, I have had many occasions to work with Molly and see her love for the library and our community. No matter what project Molly undertakes, I know her enthusiasm will generate new ways to involve co-workers, community partners, and library board members.

Molly has chaired two Big Read programs in the last four years, one for "The Maltese Falcon" and another for "My Antonia." These programs have seen wide community involvement—from free books provided by a local bookstore, to exhibits at county historical and art museums, to readings in schools—featuring Little Reads that relate to the adult discussion programs.

On one occasion, Molly accompanied "Detective Chet Gecko," a children's book character, to a city council meeting to help promote events for The Festival of the Book and The Big Read. This proved to me that she is willing to go the extra mile, have some fun, and promote not only the library, but also the importance of reading.

Molly has come to The Friends for financial support several times. She is always prepared with expense figures, charts of in-kind donations, and information to answer any concerns the board may have. Aside from helping to fund aspects of the Big Read projects, the Friends sponsor Book Chat

Bags. This concept was one of Molly's ways to expand book clubs: Several copies of a book are gathered in a bag (or now it's a box) with discussion questions, author information, and book reviews, which are then able to be circulated. Under her direction, the Book Chat Bags have expanded every year—starting with 10 selections to test the interest to adding 10 new titles a year to accommodate the demand.

Under Molly's direction, the sets come with a flexible reservation system that accommodates the more fluid meeting schedules of local groups, yet ensure that kits are ready and on time for the next group. The program is so popular that it has grown to over 100 kits already booked into 2014. And the geographic scope of the program has spread across the state via Inter-library loan, from Darby to Miles City, and from Bozeman to Billings, and from out of the state into Idaho.

The Friends also sponsor the Montana Book Award. Molly has worked with us in the past year to host the Montana Book Award page on the newly re-vamped Missoula Public Library website. Anyone who has worked on a website knows the large learning curve involved in “new software and platforms.” Molly coordinated the transferral of all our information, eight years of awards, nomination processes, and photographs with minimal time and effort. We are now finishing the process with descriptions of the actual original artwork prepared for each winning author. For Molly, no task is too daunting.

Molly Lederman is professional, prepared, organized, and an inspiration to her fellow workers. She revived the Book Cart Drill team, which participates in several Missoula parades—The University of Montana Homecoming, Day of the Dead, Holiday Festival of Lights, and Wildlife Film Fest. Molly revived the tradition, but now other librarians keep the tradition alive. What fun to see the special costumes and disguised book carts perform!