

CO-3

MPLA AWARDS COMMITTEE REPORT

October 2007

The Awards Committee has successfully worked through e-mail. Due to constraints of time we were able to finish work on only one of the two projects we have been working on. The recommendation for the Unsung Heroes award follows. Before the next Executive Board meeting we will complete our further discussion of the Board Choice Awards.

The call for nominations was sent in the October issue of the Newsletter. The deadline for nominations is February 8, 2008. Further advertising will include an article in the February issue, a press release sent to each of the state representatives for their state newsletter, and a mass e-mailing to all members.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Avery
Chair

THE UNSUNG HEROES AWARD

MPLA Awards Committee Recommendation

October 5, 2007

Background

This award was first suggested in the Long Range Plan 2004-2009. It was thought by the subgroup of the Long Range Planning Committee, that we have so people who are doing good things for libraries, either as individuals or as libraries, that often so unrecognized. This happens for a variety of reasons. It was seen as an opportunity for MPLA to step forward and do something that is not being done.

Goal III – MPLA will take a leadership role in the MPLA region.

Objective B – MPLA will recognize and promote leadership and excellence within the MPLA region through its annual awards.

1. A task force with members from the Awards Committee, Membership Committee, and at least two of the Electronic Communities will study and report to the Board on developing ways to recognize “Unsung Heroes” (those that are otherwise not going to get recognized such as “Excellence in Small Libraries” for less than 5,000 population).
(October 2007)

Stephen Van Buren was appointed to head up the task force. They reported at the Executive Board Meeting, October 12, 2005 in Jackson, Wyoming. Their report contained questions on how to implement such an award, identifying recipients, what the award should consist of, and the frequency of the award.. At that time the task force was charged with “fleshing out the details of the Award” using the comments from the Executive Board meeting. In fall 2006 Wayne

Hanway, current MPLA president, charged the Awards Committee with coming up with finalizing the recommendations for the award and implementing it.

Discussion of the “Unsung Heroes” Award

The Awards Committee recognizes the desire to recognize those that go unrecognized because of limitations in situation and visibility. The Awards Committee concurs with the Task Force in that there is a considerable problem with any requirement that the recipient be an MPLA member or any kind of member of any library association. This would automatically exclude groups, for one thing, and for another, would exclude most line-level staff members.

The second thing is that each of the two words in the Award title needs to have criteria established. The first of these is “Unsung”.

Webster’s defines “unsung” as “not celebrated or praised”.

This would be a very strict criterion. Does this mean the nominees have not been recognized in anyway? Many of the kinds of individuals and projects we seek to recognize, would be significant to their community and been recognized in local papers or state library newsletters. Certainly individuals would have been recognized in their own institutions. Therefore, the Committee suggests that it term “unsung” be expanded to the sense of unrecognized on a regional or national level. The second word is “heroes”. The two senses of this word that seem apt are “a man admired for his achievements and noble qualities” and “one that shows great courage”. It could be implied that, in library situations, great courage pertains primarily to intellectual freedom issues or carrying ballot issues forward. However, there are many other situations, such as response to a disaster or exemplary promotion of one of the core values of libraries. It seems that we have two options for a time frame: “hero” for a specified event or “hero” for a career. Since we already have the Library Champion and Distinguished Service Awards, this award should be for a specific event.

In summary, the Awards Committee agrees that because the MPLA region contains so many small libraries that are often not recognized for their achievements and so many librarians that because of their situation are not active or recognized even on the state level, there is a need for MPLA to recognize these unseen, but very definitely important, people and libraries.

Recommendation of the Awards Committee

Description of the award: The MPLA Unsung Hero award is given to any library individual(s) or group(s) in the MPLA region who have worked on a special project that has some significance to a community but which has not been eligible for a library award or which has for other reasons specified by the nominator not been recognized, to the degree that it merits, by any library organization.

Nomination process. This award will be included in the regular call for awards. The nominator will need to include an explanation of why this person/library has not been nominated for other awards. The nominee need not be a MPLA member.

Frequency of the Award: The award will be given annual, if an appropriate nominee is identified.

The award: The award will be a certificate presented at the MPLA awards function at the annual conference, one year free membership to MPLA (even to those who are members), a listing with a description of the reason for the award on the MPLA webpage, and recognition in the MPLA Newsletter.