



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press
Colby High School sophomores Kelly Gerstner, left, and Katie Strange, right, performed their duet "Elizabeth the Fourth" during the annual forensics open house Monday at the high school.

Librarian emphasizes free service

Free downloadable audio books will be here Monday. All you need is a free Kansas library card available at any Colby library.

The State Library of Kansas is planning to debut a free downloadable audio book Internet service Monday.

Pioneer Memorial Library and the H.F. Davis Memorial Library at Colby Community College will be partnering together at 2 p.m., Monday, to offer a free demonstration of how this service works.

If you are free for a few minutes Monday, come down to the conference room of Pioneer Memorial Library at 2 p.m. to see what the hubbub is all about.

The services of the library, as some may argue, are moving increasingly towards the virtual world.

This trend is undeniable.

However, it is important to add that few if any of the traditional services of libraries have gone by the wayside.

Books, magazines, audio books on tape or CD, and reference services (to name a few) are all still very important and very relevant services of the library. In fact, with information becoming more ambiguous than ever, I would argue that, in many cases, it is easier to find reliable information through books in the library than "Googling" it on the Internet. But I digress.

There is no question that libraries are trying to make our services more accessible and convenient for our patrons. There was a time that I might have considered myself a purist and dismissed the notion of contravening the pleasure of reading with listening to an audio book.

As I have come to learn though, content is more important than for-



Jeff Friesen

• Library Link

mat. After one good, uninterrupted audio book session, I was hooked. Audio books serve a great purpose in situations such as driving (during which reading is not advised).

In other instances; however, virtual-only environments are much harder for me to envision.

For example, imagine cuddling up to the fireplace with a good PDA. In short, the importance will always be in the balance of services that meet the needs of all patrons.

But to come full circle, it is not hard to justify a balance of services when a service is free!

Find out Monday how you can supplement the audio book collection of Pioneer Memorial Library by taking advantage of the free downloadable audio book service offered by the State Library of Kan-

sas.

Also, don't forget that next week is the last "Booked for Lunch" until September.

On Tuesday at noon Cathy Gordon will be reviewing the book "Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling" by Ross King.

Plan to be here, lunch will be served.

Pioneer Memorial Library is located at 375 W. Fourth St. and open seven days a week. Winter hours are as follows: Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. — 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. — 5 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. — 4 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. — 4 p.m.

For information, call the library at 460-4470 or visit our website at www.colbylibrary.com.

As always, we are here to serve you.

Panel recommends ending FEMA

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hurricane Katrina's latest fatality should be FEMA, the nation's disaster response agency, a Senate inquiry concluded in calling for a government overhaul to avoid future failures like those the devastating storm exposed.

Eighty-six recommendations by the bipartisan panel indicate the United States is still woefully unprepared for a storm of Katrina's scope with the start of the hurricane season little more than a month away.

Though the proposed changes do not place blame on any official or government agency, Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., will offer "additional views" to the panel's findings in a statement accusing President Bush of failing "to provide critical leadership when it was most needed."

"The United States was, and is, ill-prepared to respond to a catastrophic event of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina," said the recommendations. "Catastrophic events are, by their nature, difficult to imagine and to adequately plan for, and the existing plans and training proved inadequate in Katrina."

The recommendations were being released Thursday and will be included in the Senate panel's full report to be issued next week.

The recommendations, obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, are the product of a seven-month Senate investigation. The probe follows similar inquiries by the House and White House and comes in an election year in which Democrats have seized on Katrina to attack the Bush administration.

President Bush was visiting Louisiana and Mississippi on Thursday.

Katrina, which struck on Aug. 29, was one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history. The storm killed more than 1,300 people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, left hundreds of thousands of homeless and caused tens of billions of dollars in damage.

The recommendations conclude that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is crippled beyond repair by years of poor leadership and inadequate funding. They call for a new agency to plan and carry out relief missions for domestic disasters.

Unlike now, the authority

would communicate directly with the president during major crises, and any dramatic cuts to budget or staffing levels would have to be approved by Congress. It would remain within the Homeland Security Department and would continue receiving resources from the department.

The new authority would be "better equipped with the tools to prepare for and respond to a disaster," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who led the inquiry by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. She described FEMA as a "shambles" and said the change "will help ensure that we do not have a repeat of the failures following Hurricane Katrina."

The proposal drew disdain from Homeland Security and its critics, both sides questioning the need for another bureaucratic shuffling that they said wouldn't accomplish much.

"It's time to stop playing around with the organizational charts and to start focusing on government, at all levels, that are preparing for this storm season," Homeland Security spokesman Russ Knocke said.



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State worried about wheat

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A month before harvest time, wheat farmers say unusually dry weather could make this the worst crop in decades.

"A lot of our wheat fields around here are what we call 60-mile-an-hour fields," said Tim Zulkoski, manager of Farmers Grain Co. in Renfrow. "If you drive by a field going 60 miles an hour, it looks pretty good. Go 70, and it looks even better. But if you stop and get out in it, well, you'll find out just how thin it really is."

Mark Hodges, executive director of the State Wheat Commission, said drought conditions make the outlook for this harvest the worst he's seen in his 30-year career.

Wheat prices are currently \$4.35 a bushel. Last year, wheat sold for \$3 a bushel.

"The prices are up because no one has wheat," said Jim Reese, state executive director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency in Stillwater.

Fertilizer costs have also increased. Farmers paid \$180 a ton four or five years ago, and today, they pay \$425 a ton, Reese said.



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