



GRG recently completed our evaluation of the "*Pushing the Limits*": Making Sense of Science (PTL) program.

#### *The Program*

PTL is an NSF-funded program that is designed to increase the ability of library professionals to provide science- and math-themed programming for adult learners in their libraries. The program was targeted towards rural and small libraries, many of which would not have had the resources or the personnel to develop such programming on their own.

PTL provided librarians with professional development resources (including videos and workshops), technical assistance, access to specially produced videos with relevant science-content, and additional funding to increase circulations materials, purchase refreshments, etc. Library professionals worked with a local science partner (usually experts in their field and as diverse as biologists, criminologists, and park rangers) to facilitate

discussions, which were sparked by science-themed books.

#### *The Books & Discussions*

Some of the books were wildly popular, while others were more divisive, but every book sparked an engaging discussion. While libraries could (and did) switch out some books, the suggested readings focused on the themes of knowledge, nature, survival, and connection. To draw patrons, some libraries offered locally inspired meals (black forest cake and corned bear made appearances) as well as impromptu field trips and hands on activities.

In case you're looking to expand your own science knowledge, among the suggested titles were:

*The Land of Painted Caves* by Jean Auel

*When the Killing's Done* by T.C. Boyle

*Arctic Drift* by Clive Cussler

*Thunderstruck* by Erik Larson

#### *Our Findings*

PTL was a huge success. Library patrons were successfully (and often enthusiastically) engaged in science-themed discussions and debates and many expressed their hope that such programming would continue beyond the original 4 themes. In addition, library professionals felt their ability to organize and run science-themed programming was increased as well as their ability to act as informal science educators.