



COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
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MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

CONTENTS

- Introduction and Purpose 2
- History of the Commission and the Montana State Library 2
- Timeline: 1895 to present..... 7
- Role of the Commission 12
 - Commission bylaws 12
 - Commission and Chair Duties 14
 - Chair's Duties..... 14
 - Vice-Chair's Duties 14
 - Commissioners' Duties 15
 - The State Library Commission Group norms: 15
- Commission Meetings 15
 - Open Meetings..... 15
- What is the relationship of the Commission to the State Library?..... 18
- What is the relationship of the Commission to local libraries? 18
- Commission Resolutions 19
 - Fair Library Access for all Montanans: A Resolution From the Montana State Library Commission, Regarding Fair Standard Access to Library Content and Services for All Montanans 19
- About MSL..... 21
 - Organizational Chart..... 21
 - Website Links 22
- Works Cited..... 23



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This document contains information about the Montana State Library Commission (MSLC) and the State Library (MSL).

Please direct any questions about the contents to State Librarian Jennie Stapp.

Created July 2023.

HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION AND THE MONTANA STATE LIBRARY

Introduction from [*Montana State Library Commission: History and Services, January 1964*](#)

The State Library Commission exists today because of the perseverance of a small but valiant group of dedicated librarians and friends who worked diligently and patiently to achieve favorable legislation for its establishment.

As early as 1895, a law was passed providing for a traveling library but no funds were appropriated by the legislature. Lay groups proposed that the State Library Association support and finance such a library but it is understandable that this was not feasible since the Association had a yearly budget of approximately \$35.00.

It was not until 1929 that the legislature passed the law which established the State Library Commission. Again, as in 1895, no funds were appropriated. Then, in 1945, a Governor's Committee on Reorganization recommended that since no budget had ever been provided, the State Library Commission be removed from the statutes. Every effort to keep the Commission was made by the Montana Library Association and with success. The Legislative Assembly appropriated funds, and while the amount was modest, it was sufficient to permit the Board to engage a librarian as its executive officer and to make a small start toward fulfilling its duties as set forth in the Montana statutes.

Rent-free quarters were provided at the Montana State University Library [University of Montana] and it is for this reason that this state agency has been located in Missoula. When larger quarters were essential and when funds to pay rent were available under the Library Services Act, efforts were made to find suitable space in Helena. This was not possible at that time and so Headquarters continue to be in Missoula. It is now located at South Avenue and Middlesex.

The State Library Commission has offered assistance to the libraries in the state since its establishment. With the passage of the Library Services Act in 1956, services could be expanded to a significant degree and the present dynamic program initiated.

HISTORY AND SERVICES OVERVIEW

The early years of the State Library Commission were focused on developing services and resources to provide access to libraries for all Montanans—particularly those whose communities did not already have that access. As needs and technology have changed, the services supported by the Commission have



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

also evolved. State and federal funding have supported services at varying levels throughout the history of the Commission and State Library.

The earliest services supported by the MSLEC/MSLC were traveling book collections. When Library Services Act funds arrived in the mid-1950s, bookmobiles helped deliver the collections and the professional librarians to remote communities. A highlight in the 1960s was the installation of telephone service in each county library. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, public library standards and librarian certification were on the agenda. Resource sharing—catalogs of materials and traveling collections—were a focus through the 1980s and into the 1990s when the Internet enabled connected library systems. By the end of the 1990s, internet access was available in all of Montana’s public libraries. Shared online library systems and digital collections grew in the early 2000s. Awareness of a need to provide digital access to natural, geographical, historical, and government information brought support from the Legislature to consolidate staff and systems at the State Library. The Natural Heritage Program, Geographic Information Systems, and Digital Library are integral services of the State Library. ([See Organizational Chart](#))

STATE LIBRARIANS

In the years from 1929 to 1965, one Commission Chair and three State Librarians served. 10 individuals have served as State Librarian since 1970, including Alma Smith Jacobs—one of Montana’s most honored librarians.

Years	Last Name	First Name	Details
1929-31	Buckhous	M. Gertrude	Secretary/Chair of MSLEC
1931-1939	Keeney	Philip	UM Librarian/Secretary of MSLEC
1939-1945	Campbell	Kathleen	UM Librarian/Secretary of MSLEC
1946-57	Torgrimson	Ellen	Secretary
1957-70	Longworth	Ruth O.	State Librarian
1970-73	Hoffman	David R.	State Librarian
1973	Peel	Richard	State Librarian (acting, May-July)
1973-82	Jacobs	Alma S.	State Librarian
1982	Cooper	Alene	State Librarian (acting, January-May)
1982-88	Parker	Sara	State Librarian
1988	Schlesinger	Deborah	State Librarian (acting, August-December)
1989-96	Miller	Richard T.	State Librarian
1996	Staffeldt	Darlene	State Librarian (acting, May-July)
1996-2004	Strege	Karen	State Librarian
2004-2011	Staffeldt	Darlene	State Librarian
2012-	Stapp	Jennie	State Librarian

COMMISSIONERS

105 individuals have served on the MSLC since 1929. By law, the Librarian at the University of Montana was designated as the Secretary and Chair of the MSLEC/MSLC. In the early 1960s, the Commission Chair requirement changed to allow for election of the chair from the members of the Commission. In 1964, Kathleen Campbell retired after having served as both UM Librarian and Commission Chair for more than 20 years. Terms are three years.



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1929-31	Buckhous	M. Gertrude	Chair and Secretary Missoula
1931	Keeley	Philip	Missoula
1929-1932	Main	Clara M.	Lewistown
1932-1934	Powell	Elizabeth B.	Appointed by Governor Erickson Missoula
1934	Speer	Lucille	Bonner
1939-64	Campbell	Kathleen	Chair, Librarian Montana State University Missoula
1945	Ackley	Corrine B	Lewistown
1945-50	Dillavou	Mrs. R.C.	Billings
1945-48	Perham	Mrs. Wallace.T	Glendive
1929-49	Ireland	Elizabeth	Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ex-officio Helena
1945-52	Fulmer	Margaret	Great Falls
1948-51	Warren	Mrs. D.C.	Glendive
1950-53	Fraser	Mrs. John B.	Billings
1951-54	Sattler	Mrs. Peter	Glendive
1952-55	Graybill	Mrs. Leo C	Great Falls
1949-57	Condon	Mary M.	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1957-69	Miller	Harriet	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1953-62	Ewing	Mrs. R.L. (Helen)	Bozeman
1954-63	Mast	Mrs. J.B.	Bozeman
1955-56	Fulton	Mrs. Frank	Plevna
1957-61	Little	Dr. Amos R	Helena
1961-64	King	Mrs. Marjorie (Joe C., III)	Winnett
1962-65	Houchen	Mrs. Walter	Fairview
1963-66	Baillie	Mr. William L.	Chair (1965-66) Great Falls
1964	Pemberton	Mrs. A.O. (Velma)	Chair (1967), Vice Chair (1969) Broadus
1964-82	Thompson	Earle C.	Dean of Library Services, Montana State University/University of Montana Missoula
1967-73	Traynor	Mike	Vice Chair (1967), Chair (1969) Scobey
1969-77	Colburg	Dolores	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1969-81	Conklin	William P.	Vice Chair (1969) Great Falls
1970-73	Davies	Doris	Chair (1972) Billings
1971-77	Gibson	Don	Lindsay
1973-76	Warden	Margaret	Great Falls
1975-78	Watt	Mrs. Mabel (Robert)	Missoula
1977-1980	Sullivan	Mildred	Glendive
1977-81	Rice	Georgia Ruth	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1979- 1982	Fitzpatrick	Natalie S.	Anaconda
1982-83	Oelz	Erling	Interim Director, University of Montana Missoula
1980 - 1983	Evans	Joan M.	Billings
1981 - 1982	Argenbright	Ed	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1981 - 1990	McClerman	Dr. Henry	Butte
1983 - 1984	Cates	Sheila	Designee - Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1983 - 1989	Davis	Martha B.	Dillon
1983 - 1990	Alldredge	Noreen	Director of Libraries, MSU Bozeman
1983 - 1991	Abramson	C.E. (Abe)	Missoula
1982 - 1991	Hudspeth	Mary	Libby/Glendive/Bozeman



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
1984 – 1984	Huennekens	Herbert	Billings
1985 – 1987	Everett	Karen	Billings
1985 – 1989	Braaten	Victoria	Big Timber
1988 – 1990	Thompson	Marie	Billings
1990 – 1990	Patrick	Dr. Ruth	Dean of Libraries, University of Montana Missoula
1990 – 2000	Doggett	Mary	White Sulphur Springs
1991 – 2001	Keenan	Nancy	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1991 – 1993	Wallin	Lloyd	
1991 – 1996	Hauptman	Anne	
1991 – 2000	Schulz	Michael	Library Director, Western Montana College Dillon
1992 – 1994	Taylor	Vada	
1992 – 1996	Guthrie	Peggy	
1993 – 1993	Monprode-Holt	Lorrie	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1993 – 1996	Lundy	Myrna	
1994 – 1995	Boom	Diana	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1994 – 1997	Gray	Eleanor	Miles City
1995 – 1999	Stearns	Harold (Hal)	Helena
1996 – 2002	Laird	Dorothy	
1996 – 2008	Bergeron	Cheri	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
1997 – 2003	Garvey	Rosemary	Ramsay
1997 – 2003	Johnson	David	
1999 – 2005	Randall	Al	Troy
2001 – 2004	Atchley	Ralph	
2001 – 2007	Morton	Bruce	Dean of Libraries Bozeman
2001 – 2008	McCulloch	Linda	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2002 – 2005	Staffanson	Gail	Sidney
2003 – 2004	Broadbent	Toni	Helena
2003 – 2007	Bitz	Caroline	Box Elder
2003 – 2012	Allen	Donald	Billings
2004 – 2009	Moody	Ron	Lewistown
2005 – 2008	Carrywater	Cindy	Hays-Lodgepole
2005 – 2009	Smith	Nora	
2007 – 2011	Allen	Bonnie	Dean of Libraries, UM Missoula
2007 – 2013	Hinch	Marsha	Choteau
2008 – 2010	Funda	Joyce	Kalispell
2009 – 2014	Quillin	Richard	Whitefish
2009 – 2015	Scheetz	Anita	Sidney
2009 – 2017	Bartow	Colet	Designee – Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2009 – 2017	Juneau	Denise	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2010 – 2014	Miller	Lee (Phillips)	Butte
2012 – 2015	Gransbery	Jim	Billings
2012 – 2016	Roberts	Brent	Library Director, MSU-Billings
2013 – 2014	Hunter	Fredricka	
2014 – 2022	Newell	Bruce	Helena
2014 – 2020	Kish	Anne	Twin Bridges
2014 – 2020	LaFromboise	Aaron	Browning
2015 – 2018	Eissinger	Connie	Brockway
2015 – 2021	Wall	Ken	Missoula
2016 – 2022	Arlitsch	Kenning	Dean of Libraries, MSU Bozeman



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Term	Last Name	First Name	Details
2017 –	Arntzen	Elsie	Superintendent of Public Instruction Helena
2018 – 2021	Doggett	Jamie	White Sulphur Springs
2020 – 2021	Behe	Connie	Kalispell
2020 – 2023	Johnson	Dalton	Missoula
2021-2022	Kerr	Kristin	Helena
2021	Scribner	Robyn	Geraldine
2021	Taylor	Peggy	Whitefish
2022	Hall	Tammy	Bozeman
2022-2023	Dubosky	Patricia	Library Director, MSU Northern Havre
2022	Tom	Burnett	Bozeman
2023	Rossmann	Brian	Open Educational Resources (OER) and Scholarly Communication Librarian, Montana State University - Bozeman

LOCATIONS

The MSLC and State Library were housed at the University of Montana in Missoula from 1929 to the late 1950s. Rent-free locations on campus included Main Hall, Rankin Hall, Social Sciences Building, and a World War I barrack. A leased office on South Avenue was the last location in Missoula.

In 1965, through the support of Governor Babcock, the MSLC moved to a converted warehouse at 930 East Lyndale Avenue in Helena. The next move was to 1515 East 6th Avenue in 1982 when the Joe Mazurek Building was completed.

A flood in July 2022 prompted the agency to move again to 1201 11th Avenue in November 2022.



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

TIMELINE: 1895 TO PRESENT

Year	Milestones
1895	Law passed to create a traveling library collection with no appropriation to fund the service
1906	Montana Library Association established
1915	Montana Legislature authorizes the establishment of county libraries
1929	Revised Codes of Montana (RCM) 1575.1 State library extension commission created by an act of the 1929 Legislative Assembly, no appropriation made to support operations, first meeting of the Montana State Library Extension Commission (MSLEC) in August
1931	Gertrude Buckhouse, University of Montana Librarian and Commission Chair, dies unexpectedly
1939	Kathleen Campbell, University of Montana Librarian, becomes Chair/Secretary of the MSLEC
1945	Legislative Assembly appropriates \$20,000 for biennium, Ellen Torgrimson hired as State Librarian
1946	First Annual Report of the Commission published, Commission Headquartered in Missoula at the University of Montana.
1956	Passage of Library Service Act by U.S. Congress, Northwest Federation of Libraries formed
1957	Ruth Longworth hired as Secretary to the MSLEC and Headquarters Librarian
1958	Great Falls Library Federation formed
1959	Sagebrush Library Federation formed, <i>Library Laws of Montana</i> published
1961	Name changed to State Library Commission from MSLEC, and State Librarian from Secretary
1962	Montana State Library Commission <i>Statement of Policy</i> published
1964	Big Sky Federation formed, <i>Montana State Library Commission History and Services</i> published, Library Services Act expanded to Library Service and Construction Act
1965	State Library moves to 930 East Lyndale Avenue, Helena
1966	South Central Federation formed, University of Montana Librarian Kathleen “Casey” Campbell retires after serving as Commission Chair from 1939 until 1964
1967	Montana Library Advisory Council established to meet requirements for the Library Services and Construction Act.
1968	State Library became a regional library for the blind and physically handicapped and a state publications library distribution center
1969	Institutional library services established, Public Library Standards adopted by the Commission
1970	Ruth Longworth retires as State Librarian, David Hoffman hired as State Librarian
1971	Governor’s Conference on Libraries convened
1972	Golden Plains Library Federation formed



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Year	Milestones
1973	David Hoffman resigns, Richard Peel serves as Acting State Librarian, Alma Smith Jacobs hired as State Librarian
1975	Passage of HB 55 providing for a state referendum for one state mil for funding public library federations. In the November 1976 general election the Referendum was defeated.
1976	Tamarack and Broad Valleys Federations formed
1977	First edition of the Union List of Montana Serials(ULMS) produced by Minitex
1978	Parmly Billings Library is first Montana library to join Western Library Network (WLN), Governor's Conference on Libraries and Information Services convened
1979	Passage of legislation providing 1% of coal severance tax to provide basic service through federations
1980	State Librarian Alma Smith Jacobs attends groundbreaking for the Montana Justice Building at 1515 East 6 th Avenue
1981	Montana Legislature provides funding for WLN membership for six university system libraries and the Montana State Library, Resource Sharing in Montana: A Study of Interlibrary Loan and Alternatives for a Montana Union Catalog was completed by J. Matthews and Associates, Montana State Library closes fiction collection - most of collection given to Last Copy Fiction Pool, Parmly Billings, remaining distributed among appropriate libraries
1982	Montana Governor's Council on Management, recognizing the growing amounts of natural resource data and the growing need for quick access to the data, identified (in its final report) the need for greater coordination and information sharing among natural resource agencies, State Library moves to 1515 East 6 th Avenue in Helena, Alma Smith Jacobs retires, Acting State Librarian is Alene Cooper, Sara Parker hired as State Librarian.
1983	Montana Legislature created the Natural Resource Information System and the Natural Heritage Program with the chief objective: to be a comprehensive program for the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of existing data relating to the natural resources of Montana, Action by Legislature expanded commission from 5 to 7 members, MonCat Pilot initiated with WLN resource directories distributed to 30 Montana public, school, academic and special libraries
1985	The Heritage Program began operations in October with David Genter as Director and zoologist; Steve Shelly as botanist, Nancy Grulke as community ecologist, and Lisa Shepard as the data manager. Natural Resources Information System (NRIS) established at the Montana State Library by act of the Montana Legislature, first director of NRIS was Larry Thompson. Montana State Library Commission issues the Blacktail Mission Statement
1987	Bear Creek Mission Statement issued by Montana State Library Commission, Legislature reinforces the importance of NRIS/Heritage, Montana Water Information System and Geographic Information Systems established
1988	Deborah Schlesinger was Acting State Librarian
1989	Richard T. Miller, Jr hired as State Librarian, State aid monies to libraries passed by the Montana Legislature (1) Per capita, per square mile and (2) interlibrary loan reimbursement, Commission's Pine Butte Mission Statement encouraged all libraries "... to forge partnerships which will allow them to meet the challenges facing them in the 1990s."



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Year	Milestones
1990	Montana State Library Commission approved Voluntary Certification Task Force Manual
1991	Governor’s Conference on Library and Information Services. NRIS expands staff, data sets, and reporting
1992	Blue Bear Group, Inc. conducted the study of the library federation system in Montana
1993	NRIS initiates development of internet-based services that includes an on-line natural resource information clearinghouse and is the first state in the nation to develop an automated search and retrieval of digital map information service as part of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure
1994	Library Futures Task Force Meeting
1996	Acting State Librarian Darlene Staffeldt, Karen Strege hired as State Librarian, MSL “book” logo adopted by Commission
1997	Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) of the Museum and Libraries Act of 1997 funds approved by the Commission to connect 51 libraries to the Internet, hire two technology consultants to assist libraries, Commission adopts rules to reduce the Library Services Advisory council membership from 14 to nine members appointed by the Governor and a policy statement on school libraries
1998	Remodel project initiated and completed at 1515 East 6 th Avenue with recommendations to request adding a third floor to MSL, Sue Crispin is Director of the Natural Heritage Program, ILL reimbursement rules adopted by the Commission, Talking Book Library celebrates 30 years with an event in the Capitol Rotunda, Law Revision Task Force recommendations related to District Library Law, Amendments to Multi-jurisdiction Law, and housekeeping were approved by the Commission
1999	Legislature appropriates \$400,000 for electronic databases and Gale-Infotrac is selected, MSL receives Gates Foundation Grant, Heritage Program starts <i>Optimolocus</i> newsletter, New Public Library Standards Adopted, Certification Manual published and mailed to libraries, Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) funds expire, OCLC Cost Sharing formula implemented
2000	First Summer Public Library Directors’ Institute held at MSU-Billings, NRIS receives \$238,000 IMLS National Leadership Grant
2001	Institutional Library services discontinued, Montana Library Directory moves online, The Big Bill (HB 124) makes significant changes to state and local government finance, “Western Montana Shared Catalog” changes to Montana Shared Catalog, NRIS worked with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to deploy access to water rights data, MSL celebrates 20 years of the TBL volunteers program,
2002	Online collection of library statistics initiated, In response to the “Big Bill” of 2001, an AG opinion confirms that library boards remain in control of their own budgets, Montana Shared Catalog administered by the State Library with the participation and financial commitment from 17 initial, multi-type libraries
2003	Digital Library is organized to merge Library Information Services and Natural Resource Information System departments, Field Guide to Montana Animal Species launched, Professional Education and Employment for Librarians (PEEL) grant received from Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Year	Milestones
2004	Gates Foundation Staying Connected grant awarded for equipment and connectivity upgrades, Telephone Pioneer Group Moves to the Talking Book Library, Montana Shared Catalog grows to 43 libraries with addition of BridgerNet, MLNCAT (http://mlncat.org) replaced the Montana Library Network (MLN) Gateway, Darlene Staffeldt hired as State Librarian, Natural Heritage Program website launched, Partners group forms within the MSC to virtually share collections,
2005	Montana Legislature passed the Montana Land Information Act (MLIA), 90-1-401, MCA
2006	Award-winning “What’s Your Story” marketing campaign launched
2007	Online databases fully funded by Legislature through 2009
2009	Certification Program updated, SWIM Grant awarded by IMLS
2010	25 th anniversary of NRIS and Natural Heritage Program (NHP), Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) Grant awarded to MSL,
2011	State general fund monies that had previously been allocated to individual reimbursements to libraries for interlibrary loan costs were repurposed through an administrative rules hearing process and designated as “resource sharing funds,”
2012	Jennie Stapp hired as State Librarian
2013	Montana Land Information Act reviewed by the Legislature and changed so that the Montana State Library assumed responsibility for the Act from the State Department of Administration
2014	MSL completed a patron outreach project to reach more Montanans to qualify for Talking Book services
2015	MSL receives permanent legislative funding for the Water Information System
2016	MSL adopted a new strategic framework that prioritizes fostering partnerships, securing sufficient and sustainable funding, and creating a useful information infrastructure
2017	MSL closes public access computers and vacates lower level at 1515 East 6 th Avenue due to budget cuts and completion of collection digitization. ASPeN launched,
2018	MSL celebrates completing going “fully digital” with the completion of a 10-year project to scan its print publications collection and to convert its analog Talking Book Library collection to digital format.
2019	Broadband in Montana Libraries Study
2020	Commission confirms role of MSL as Montana Natural Heritage Program administrator, COVID-19 Pandemic sends all employees to remote work from home.
2021	Commission approves MSL rebranding project budget and revised public library standards
2022	Revised Public Library Standards go into effect, State Library of Utah contracted to provide Talking Book Library services, Offices at 1515 East 6 th Avenue flooded and MSL moves to 1201 11 th Avenue, Commission approves new branding



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Year	Milestones
2023	MSL Learn Online course platform launched Increased State Aid to public libraries passes Legislature, includes addition of tribal libraries serving the public Montana Spatial Real Time Network enterprise funding passes Legislature Montana Memory Project is rebranded the Montana History Portal Commission adopts updated Certification Program



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The State Library Commission is established by Montana statute MCA § [22-1-101](#).

The role of the State Library Commission is to set forth policies and funding priorities that empower the State Library to meet its mission and statutory obligations and to advocate for the State Library and the Montana library and information communities whenever possible.

1. The Commissioners will read and come to meetings prepared to discuss agenda items;
2. Commission meetings follow Robert's Rules of Order;
3. Commissioners are bound by the State [Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct](#).

COMMISSION BYLAWS

1. MEMBERS

- a. The State Library Commission's composition is defined in statute. MCA § 22-1-101

2. COMPENSATION

- a. Members of the Commission shall receive expenses and any compensation as provided by statute. MCA § 22-1-101, MCA § 2-15-124. All travel for Commission members shall be approved by the Commission.

3. OFFICERS

- a. The Commission has two officers, a chairperson and a vice-chairperson. Officers must be members of the Commission. MCA § 22-1-101 specifies "presiding officer".
- b. The chairperson shall preside at all meetings and shall appoint such committees as may be appropriate.
- c. The vice-chairperson shall serve in the absence of the chairperson.
- d. In the absence of both the chairperson and vice-chairperson the chair will appoint a temporary acting chair.

4. ELECTIONS of OFFICERS

- a. Elections shall be held annually for chairperson and vice-chairperson.
- b. At the last meeting of the fiscal year, which is normally in June, candidates shall self nominate themselves for office, or be nominated by other commissioners.
 - i. Commissioners will accept or decline nominations.
 - ii. At this (normally June) meeting, the commission, for the purposes of receiving and discussing officer nominations, shall discuss commission priorities for the coming fiscal year. Nominees shall describe their interests in serving as an officer.
 - iii. The nominees for chair and vice-chair shall make up the slate of prospective officers.
- c. At the first regular meeting of the fiscal year, which is normally held in August, the chairperson and vice-chairperson shall be elected annually from the slate of prospective officers, to serve for the current fiscal year.



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

- ii. Carry out policy decisions of the Commission and is responsible for management of the State Library programs. Management information requests by Commission members shall be made to the State Librarian.
 - iii. Assist the Commission in preparing an annual report for its submission to the Governor and State Legislature.
8. BYLAWS AMENDMENT & REVIEW
 - a. These bylaws may be reconsidered at any commission meeting, the action to amend the bylaws taken at the next regular Commission meeting.
 - b. These bylaws shall be placed on the agenda for review, normally at the February meeting each year.

Updated April 10, 2019, reviewed annually, review and approval February 14, 2022

COMMISSION AND CHAIR DUTIES

CHAIR'S DUTIES

Many of these duties are responsibilities shared by all commissioners. See 'Commissioners' Duties' below.

The board chair:

1. Understands, supports, and is able to clearly explain the mission, goals, and objectives of the Montana State Library.
2. Develops meeting agendas in cooperation with the State Librarian.
3. Leads Commission meetings, following the orderly, fair, and civil parliamentary procedure detailed by the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order. New chairs are encouraged to study the sections of Robert's Rules, detailing the orderly running of meetings.
4. Is entitled to vote as a member of the Commission.
5. Appoint formal or informal subcommittees or work groups to accomplish the work of the Commission.
6. May be called to testify or otherwise represent the State Library to legislators, the Executive, funders, library partners, or Montana's library community.
7. Serves as the primary contact between the Commission and the State Librarian.
8. Is guided by the Commission's bylaws, pertinent sections of the Montana Code Annotated, and Montana's Administrative Rules Manual.
9. Sets a tone of civility, fair-play, respect, and inclusiveness, for all Commission business.
10. Understands that the chair's workload varies.
11. Performs other duties as required.

VICE-CHAIR'S DUTIES

1. The Vice-Chair acts as Chair when the Chair is unable to do so.



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

COMMISSIONERS' DUTIES

1. The State Library Commission is established by Montana statute MCA § 22-1-101.
2. The role of the State Library Commission is to set forth policies and funding priorities that empower the State Library to meet its mission and statutory obligations and to advocate for the State Library and the Montana library and information communities whenever possible.

THE STATE LIBRARY COMMISSION GROUP NORMS:

1. The Commissioners will read and come to meetings prepared to discuss agenda items;
2. Commission meetings follow Roberts Rules of Order;
3. Commissioners are bound by the [State Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct](#)

Adopted by State Library Commission April 11, 2018; Reviewed Annually; Last Review February 9, 2022

Roberts Rules Training – available in the [Board Resources Portal](#) provided through the Governor's Office.

COMMISSION MEETINGS

Meetings are generally held in Helena on the first Wednesday in February, June, August, October, and December.

The exception is April when the Commission meets in conjunction with the annual Montana Library Association Conference. The meeting date is dependent on the conference schedule.

The first meeting of the fiscal year is in August.

Meeting materials are available on the [MSL Website](#) prior to each meeting date. Materials include

- Agenda
- Minutes
- Memos
- Informational Reports
- Financial Reports

All meeting materials are archived on the [MSL Website](#) and recordings of each meeting are posted to the [MSL YouTube Channel](#).

Meetings are conducted according to Montana's open meeting laws MCA § [2-3-203](#), and a limited amount of time will be set aside on the agenda for comments from observers and visitors. During the conduct of business, the chairperson may recognize an observer for comment.

OPEN MEETINGS

Montana's open meeting and public participation laws are based on two fundamental rights contained in the Montana Constitution. Article II, Section 9 contains a strong right to know provision:

Right to know. No person shall be deprived of the right to examine documents or to observe the deliberations of all public bodies or agencies of state government and its subdivisions, except in cases in which the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure.



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

Article II, Section 8 guarantees the right of public participation:

Right of participation. The public has the right to expect governmental agencies to afford such reasonable opportunity for citizen participation in the operation of the agencies prior to the final decision as may be provided by law.

In the case of meetings of public agencies and other entities, these constitutional rights are primarily implemented through Montana's open meeting laws, codified at [MCA §§ 2-3-201 through 2-3-221](#). The general provision for open public meetings is contained in [MCA § 2-3-203\(1\)](#), which provides:

Meetings of public agencies and certain associations of public agencies to be open to public -- exceptions. (1) All meetings of public or governmental bodies, boards, bureaus, commissions, agencies of the state, or any political subdivision of the state or organizations or agencies supported in whole or in part by public funds, or expending public funds, including the supreme court, must be open to the public.

. . . (3) The presiding officer of any meeting may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy and then if and only if the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains and, in that event, the meeting must be open.

See [MCA § 2-3-203](#) for specific language regarding closing a meeting and individual privacy.

WHAT IS A MEETING?

Under the open meeting laws, a “meeting” is very broadly defined as “. . . the convening of a quorum of the constituent membership of a public agency or association . . . , whether corporal or by means of electronic equipment, to hear, discuss, or act upon a matter over which the agency has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.”

MCA § 2-3-202. A “quorum” is defined as “a majority of the entire body” when members are acting as a group, “not merely the action of a particular number of members as individuals.” 42 Op. Att’y Gen. No. 51 at 200-01.

An agency may not appoint any committee or subcommittee for the purpose of conducting business that is within the jurisdiction of the agency in order to avoid the requirements of the open meeting laws. MCA § 2-3-203(6). There is no statutory distinction between a “regular” or “special” meeting for purposes of determining whether it is a “meeting” subject to the open meeting laws. See MCA § 2-3-202.

A “meeting” subject to the open meeting laws occurs regardless of whether it is conducted in person, by telephone conference call, by videoconferencing, or by email. See MCA § 2-3-202 (“whether corporeal or by means of electronic equipment . . .”).

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Notice of a meeting must be given sufficiently in advance of the meeting to permit the public to attend. Id.; MCA § 2-3-103. The amount of notice required “should increase with the relative significance of the decision to be made,” with the ultimate goal of encouraging and assisting citizen participation. See 47 Op. Att’y Gen. No. 13 at 6 (1998). In the case of county commission meetings, the Attorney General has



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

suggested that 48 hours advance notice should generally be considered “sufficient to notify the public of contemplated action.” 47 Op. Att’y Gen. No. 13 at 6 (1998). However, each case will be considered based on its own unique facts, and depending on the circumstances less than 48 hours notice may be adequate. See *Jones v. Missoula County*, 330 Mont. 205, 127 P.3d 406 (2006). Failure to comply with the notice requirements may subject any decision made in violation of the requirement to be voided under MCA § 2-3-213.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

In accordance with [MCA § 2-3-212](#), the State Library Commission makes available recordings and all materials associated with the business conducted during meetings.

- [MSL Website](#)
- [MSL YouTube Channel](#)

VIOLATION OF THE OPEN MEETING LAWS

A violation of the open meeting laws may subject the agency or public body to injunctive or prospective relief, resulting in voiding the decision made in the illegal meeting. Any lawsuit seeking to void a decision must be commenced within 30 days of the decision. (see MCA § 2-3-213) A plaintiff who prevails in an action to enforce constitutional access rights under the open meeting laws may be awarded costs and reasonable attorney fees. (see MCA § 2-3-221)



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE COMMISSION TO THE STATE LIBRARY?

The State Library Commission (MSLC) is a governing body, with fiscal and rulemaking authority, for an agency known as the Montana State Library (MSL).

This is described in the Administrative Rules of Montana (see [10.101.101](#) AGENCY ORGANIZATION).

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE COMMISSION TO LOCAL LIBRARIES?

The State Library Commission has no governing authority over local libraries, however, the State Library Commission serves as a model to library boards. MCA defines the boundaries of the Commission's authority as it relates to Montana's public libraries.

MCA § 22-1-103. State library commission -- authority. The state library commission may:

- (1) give assistance and advice to all tax-supported or public libraries in the state and to all counties, cities, towns, or regions in the state that propose to establish libraries, as to the best means of establishing and improving those libraries;
- (5) serve as the agency of the state to accept and administer any state, federal, or private funds or property appropriated for or granted to it for library service or foster libraries in the state and establish regulations under which funds must be disbursed;
- (7) furnish, by contract or otherwise, library assistance and information services to state officials, state departments, and residents of those parts of the state inadequately serviced by libraries;
- (8) act as a state board of professional standards and library examiners, develop standards for public libraries, and adopt rules for the certification of librarians;

Local public library boards have “exclusive control of the expenditure of the public library fund, of construction or lease of library buildings, and of the operation and care of the library.” ([MCA § 22-1-309. Trustees – Powers and Duties](#))



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

COMMISSION RESOLUTIONS

On occasion, the Commission has adopted resolutions to provide direction and guidance in response to significant issues or to recognize individuals for service to Montana.

FAIR LIBRARY ACCESS FOR ALL MONTANANS: A RESOLUTION FROM THE MONTANA STATE LIBRARY COMMISSION, REGARDING FAIR STANDARD ACCESS TO LIBRARY CONTENT AND SERVICES FOR ALL MONTANANS

Adopted by State Library Commission June 12, 2019

Montana State Library Commission, Aaron LaFromboise, Chair

Montanans' Dignity

Whereas all Montanans are born with inherent, inviolable dignity;

Whereas all Montanans are at liberty to pursue life's basic necessities, health, and happiness;

Right to Lifelong Learning

Whereas in pursuit of life's basic necessities, health, and happiness, all Montanans have the right to seek information and pursue ideas, through any media, regardless of location, and without discrimination;

Whereas it is Montana's constitutional goal to establish a system of education which will develop the full potential of each person, with equitable education opportunities being guaranteed to each person of the state;

Whereas, the Montana State Library (MSL) is aligned with and affirms the American Library Association's placing high value in a learning society, and in affirming libraries' vital and cooperative role in supporting all Montanans' lifelong pursuit of inquiry and learning for all;

Montana State Library's Role

Whereas libraries exist to help Montanans to enrich and inform themselves;

Whereas Montana State Library's purpose is to assist all organizations, communities, and Montanans to thrive through excellent library resources and services;

Whereas it is MSL's duty to directly provide or distribute access to library content and services, sufficient to each user's needs, to all Montanans;

Whereas MSL's many dynamic relationships with users and partners include, either directly or indirectly, local, State and Federal agencies, all Montanans, and all of Montana's libraries' communities including all those they serve;

Whereas because MSL provides content or services to users through its relationships with governmental agencies, libraries, or other institutional partners, it follows that MSL measures its



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

success by evaluating the degree to which, through its efforts, individual users have access to sufficient library content and services to meet their needs;

Fair (equitable) Access

Whereas to thrive, all Montanans deserve convenient access to sufficient (if not necessarily the same) library content and services, so that they may seek information and pursue ideas;

Whereas Montana's communities vary, in regards to the availability of local resources, in differences between each communities' ability to provide their users with sufficient resources, and in their ability to participate as a partner with other sources of Montana information resources, including the Montana State Library;

Whereas all Montana communities experience gaps in library services, and vary in their ability to help their users and their communities thrive; therefore, let it be

RESOLUTION

Resolved, that the Montana State Library acknowledges that that there is an uneven distribution of library services throughout Montana, and that there are disparities in the sufficiency of library services;

Montanans have unique critical needs for convenient access to sustainably funded, sufficient unto each Montanan's needs, high-quality library content and services;

With its partners and all Montana Libraries, Montana State Library commits to developing and implementing a statewide strategy, toward the goal of providing all Montanans with equitable, sufficient access to library resources;

That all Montana's libraries, all Montana State Library's partners, and all state agencies will be encouraged to join in this statewide strategy; so that

All Montanans will have access to library content and services, sufficient unto their needs.

Other resolutions are accessible on the [MSL Website](#).



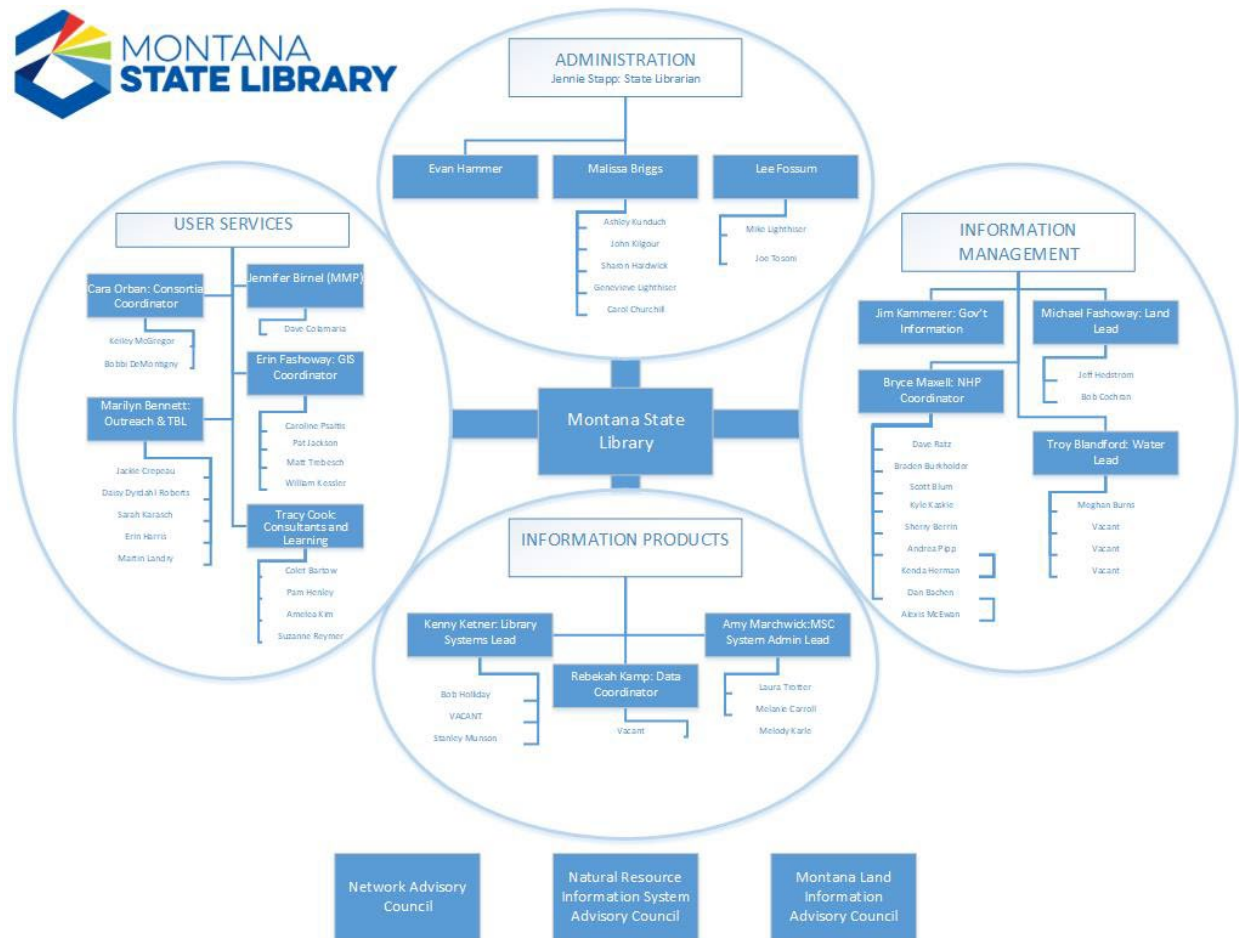
MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

ABOUT MSL

MSL is staffed with dedicated and expert professionals who perform administration, user services, information management, and information products functions.

- Administrative staff provide administrative support and leadership for the agency.
- User services staff provide support directly to vested partners and patrons including libraries, the GIS Community, the Natural Resources Community, state agencies and employees, and Talking Book Library patrons.
- Information management staff is responsible for implementing MSL collection development policy by building collections of data and information including GIS data, natural resources and water data, state government publications, and MSL's Talking Book collection
- Information products staff develop the platforms and applications that people use to access our collections and information about MSL.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

WEBSITE LINKS

AGENCY WEBSITE msl.mt.gov

ASPeN mslservices.mt.gov/ASPeN

COMMISSIONS & COUNCILS msl.mt.gov/about/commission_councils/

DASHBOARDS msl.mt.gov/about/publications/statistics

MSL YOUTUBE CHANNEL youtube.com/@montanastatelibrary

NEWS msl.mt.gov/about/news

PUBLICATIONS msl.mt.gov/about/publications

STAFF DIRECTORY directory.mt.gov/govt/state-dir/agency/library



MSL COMMISSION AND STATE LIBRARY HISTORY

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